





THE ENCYCLOPEDIA OF NORTH AMERICAN BIRDS






OVER 500 SPECIES

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FULLY ILLUSTRATED

MICHAEL VANNER



THE ENCYCLOPEDIA OF NORTH AMERICAN BIRDS

Beautifully illustrated with over 500 stunning photographs, The Encyclopedia of North American Birds is a comprehensive guide to the major bird species found across North America. The concise and informative text describes each bird, along with details of its plumage, size, preferred habitat, and nesting and feeding habits. To enable fast identification to be made, the key features of each species are highlighted and a range map clearly shows where it is likely to be found during each season of the year. The text also notes other similar birds that might be mistaken for the species in question, with details of what to look for to distinguish between them.

North America has an abundance of bird life and the pursuit of finding and identifying birds is an ideal way to get back in touch with nature. With the help of this book, anyone who is interested in birds will be able to make an informed identification of the majority of species to be found in North America.

The Encyclopedia of North American Birds is easy to use, fun to read and informative. It is an ideal introduction to birding for those who are just starting to appreciate the wonderful world of birds, and the perfect companion for anyone who is interested in wildlife and nature.

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The Encyclopedia of
NORTH
AMERICAN
BIRDS





The Encyclopedia of

NORTH AMERICAN BIRDS



MICHAEL VANNER

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This is a Parragon Publishing Book
This edition published in 2003

Parragon Publishing
Queen Street House
4 Queen Street
Bath, BA1 1HE, UK

text © Parragon
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(see page 383 for copyright details)

Produced by Atlantic Publishing
Designed by Judy Linard

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ISBN 0 75258 734 X

Printed in China

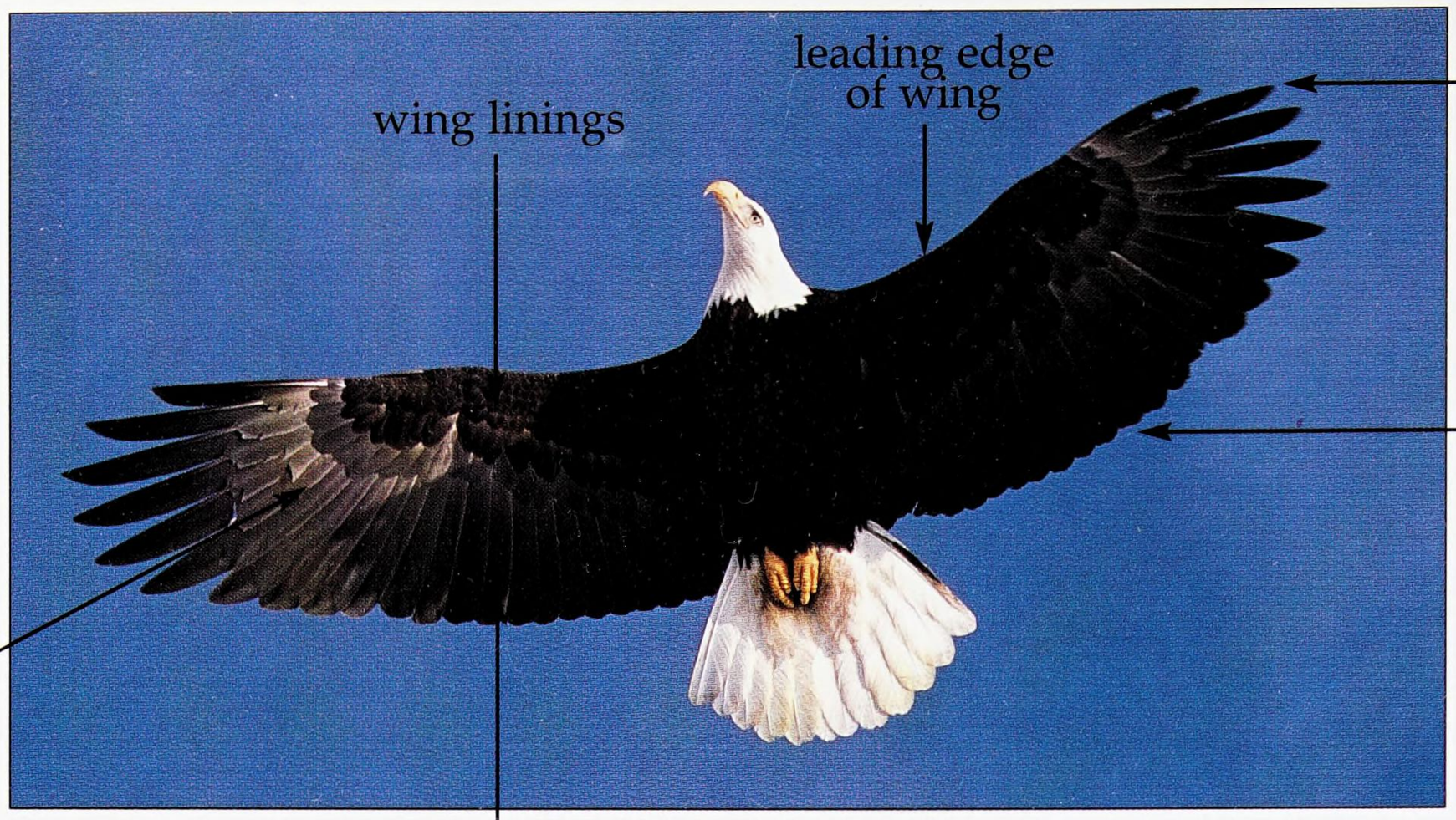
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leading edge of wing
wing tip
wing linings
trailing edge of wing
primaries
secondaries


crown
eye ring
nape
forehead
back
throat
wing bar
rump (under wings)
breast
under tail coverts
side
upper tail coverts
belly
tail

Introduction

The pursuit of finding and identifying birds is an ideal way to get back in touch with nature, to move away from the stressful and trivial worries of modern life. Birds can be an endless source of delight and are everywhere to be seen and birding for many people is primarily for enjoyment, something that can easily be done on a casual basis and with the minimum of equipment. North America has an abundance of bird life - more than 900 species either breed there, visit regularly or drop in occasionally. However, quite a few of these are found only in far-flung regions, are extremely rare or live much of their life far offshore and not even the most experienced birder has seen all of them.

Being able to identify an individual species with confidence gives a great sense of satisfaction, and this book has many features that will help anyone interested in nature to make an informed identification of most of the birds to be found in North America. Each major species is illustrated with a clear picture to help with identification, and the text gives detailed descriptions of size, habitat, plumage, nesting habits, preferred food and interesting information about behavior. It also notes other similar birds that might be mistaken for the species in question, and highlights the features to look for to make a firm identification. Range maps for each bird not only show the areas it inhabits, but also indicate whether this is in summer, winter, all year or only during migration.

Identifying Birds

The best time to look for most birds is early in the morning, when they tend to be more active - and for some species also in the early evening. However, it is possible to see a few birds throughout the day - particularly hawks and other birds that soar high in the sky. Birding is an all-year activity, since different species are seen at different times of the year. Although even the backyard or local park will usually have some interesting birds to watch, quite similar types of birds often prefer widely differing habitats, so try to look in a variety of places. The main field marks - or physical characteristics that can be picked out in the wild - to identify a bird species are listed in a separate box below the species name. They are as clear as possible, but sometimes using a technical term is unavoidable, although this has been kept to the minimum. The exact parts of a bird that these terms refer to are shown on the diagram on page 8. Many birds have different breeding plumages, or the males have different coloring to the females, and as much detail as possible about this has been given. However, juvenile birds, faded adults late in summer - and sometimes molting birds - can often look very odd and be extremely hard to identify. Each bird is also an individual, so it may not match the pictures in this book exactly. Therefore it is important to concentrate on shape and pattern rather than specific markings, and to use more than one field mark to identify each bird. Similar-looking species can also cause confusion, so any other birds that closely resemble a particular species are also listed, along with notes of any major differences.

Size

Size is another important factor - if an all-black bird is only glimpsed fleetingly, its size will tell you immediately if it is more likely to be a member of the



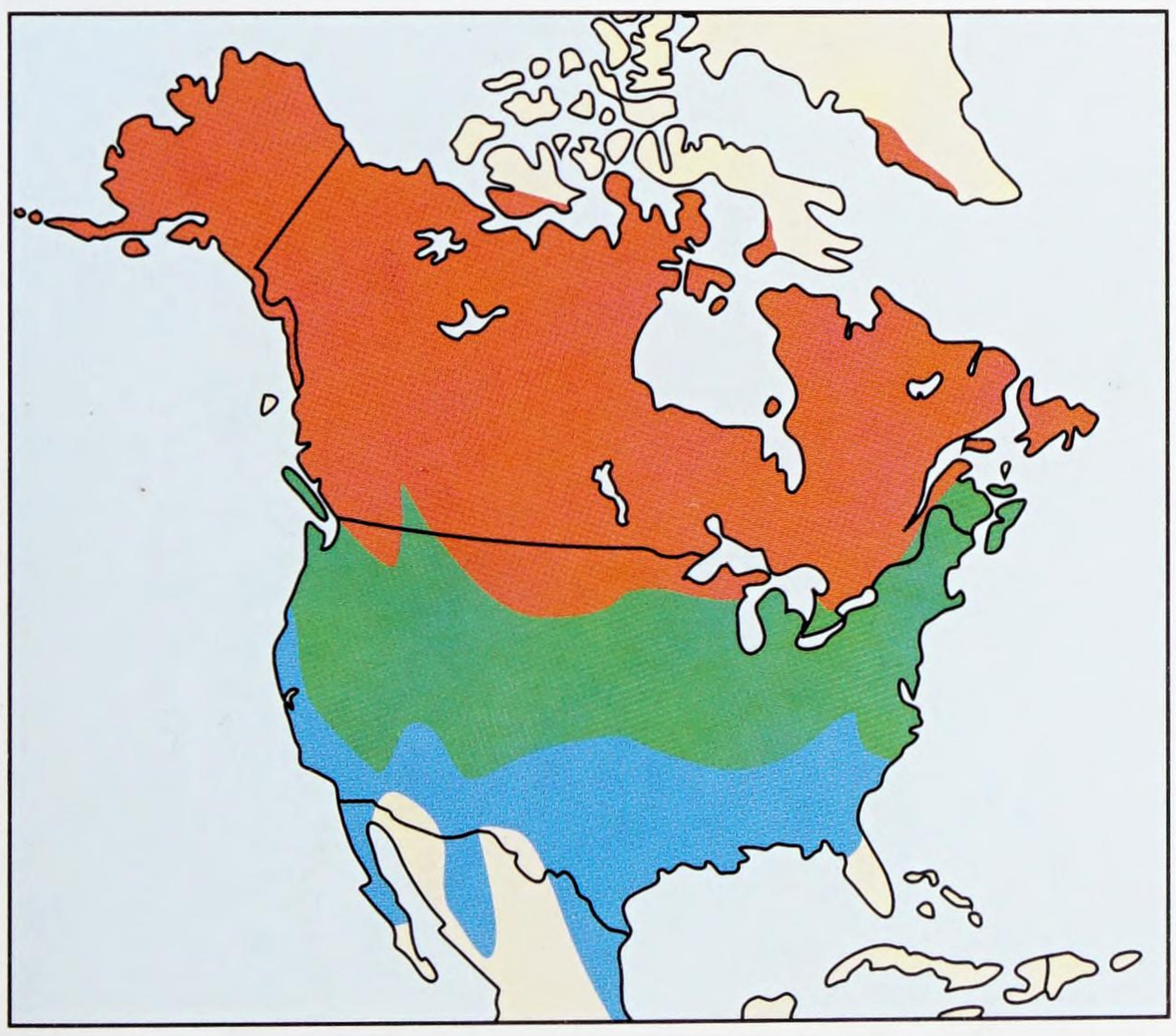
blackbird family or one of the much bigger crows. If a bird is particularly likely to be seen in flight, its wingspan is also given. At first, it may be difficult to estimate size at a distance, but constant practice will help.

Habitat

The kind of habitat that a bird prefers may also be a big clue to identifying a particular species. The Swamp Sparrow and the Rufous-crowned Sparrow can look very similar and parts of their ranges overlap, but the Swamp prefers wet places while the Rufous-crowned likes rocky hillsides. Habitat is also important in a wider sense, since many birds can only thrive in certain conditions so it is essential that their habitat is protected or the species may die out.

Range Maps

The same birds are not found everywhere, and some birds are only found in certain areas at specific times. Each bird pictured in this book has a range map, which is color-coded to show when the birder is most likely to see it. Although birds do wander out of their set ranges and storms sometimes blow them off course during migration, the maps will show the most likely candidates within a particular area. Sometimes the range map will identify a bird conclusively - the Black-capped Chickadee and the Carolina Chickadee are almost identical, but each has its own very distinct range.



summer range

winter range

all year round

Common and Scientific names

Different species of birds are organized into families that have the same characteristics. Some families have only a few members, others have many - for instance Pelicans form a small family in North America with only two examples, while Warblers form a much bigger family with more than 50 species. In addition, each individual bird not only has a common name, but also a Latin scientific name. The first part of this is known as the genus, and indicates a group within a family that is closely related. The second part identifies a particular bird. Within the family of Warblers the *Dendroica pinus* is the Pine Warbler - *Dendroica* is the genus, pinus identifies the individual bird. The Blackpoll Warbler is *Dendroica striata* so the two birds belong to the same genus and are closely related. Sometimes a bird will have a third part to its Latin name, which identifies a sub-species, but the differences cannot usually be easily identified in the wild. One advantage of the Latin names is that they are the same in any language, so birders all round the world can recognize the same bird.

The American Ornithologists' Union (AOU) Checklist

The American Ornithologists' Union (AOU) is a committee of experts who not only standardize the names and classification of birds, but also set the order in which the families are listed. Traditionally, the most primitive birds are at the beginning and the most highly-developed at the end. This book follows the official AOU list in general, but birds that are extremely rare or are only casual visitors to North America have been omitted - unless they are locally very common. For information, the full official list is as follows:

Loons
Grebes
Albatrosses
Shearwaters, petrels
Storm-petrels
Tropicbirds

Gannets, boobies
Pelicans
Cormorants
Anhingas
Frigatebirds
Herons, egrets
Ibises, spoonbills
Storks
American vultures
Flamingos
Ducks, geese, swans
Hawks and eagles
Falcons
Chachalacas
Grouse
American quail
Coots, rails
Limpkins
Cranes
Plovers
Oystercatchers
Stilts, avocets
Jacanas
Sandpipers
Gulls, terns, jaegers
Auks
Pigeons, doves
Parrots
Cuckoos
Barn owls
Typical owls
Nightjars
Swifts
Hummingbirds
Trogons
Kingfishers
Woodpeckers
Flycatchers
Shrikes
Vireos
Crows, jays, magpies
Larks
Swallows
Chickadees, titmice
Verdins
Bushtits
Nuthatches
Creepers
Wrens
Dippers
Bulbuls
Kinglets
Gnatcatchers, Old World warblers
Thrushes
Wrentits
Mockingbirds, thrashers
Starlings
Pipits, wagtails
Waxwings
Silky-flycatchers
Olive warblers
Warblers
Bananaquits
Tanagers
Sparrows, towhees
Cardinals, buntings
Blackbirds, orioles
Finches
Old World sparrows





Birding Ethics and Conservation

Birders must be very aware of their behavior when out watching - and this is even more essential as more and more people take it up. Always bear in mind that the welfare of the bird must be more important than any other consideration and avoid causing any kind of disturbance - particularly when the birds are nesting or roosting. Never do anything that might compromise the habitat of a bird. Several birds have disappeared from North America over the last century - and some have even become extinct - purely because their habitat has been damaged or destroyed by human intervention. Bird feeders will bring many species right into the backyard, but it is important to keep them scrupulously clean to avoid spreading diseases through the bird population.

It is also polite, and will help others coming along later, if the rights of landowners and other members of the population are considered and observed. Never trespass or cause any damage to private property.

Keeping Track of Sightings

Most birders like to keep some sort of record of the birds they have seen. Rather than just ticking off the names on a list, many keep a notebook recording the name of the bird, the date and place, and information about its habits and field marks. If a rare bird is spotted, this information will be essential to have the sighting verified. Rare birds are not only spotted by experts - the informed amateur has just as much chance of seeing one if he is well-prepared and knows what to look for. Knowing what to expect is also important - before visiting a new area, check what species are likely to be found there.

Many local and national birding organizations work to preserve important habitats that are under threat and to protect individual species, and amateur birders can usually become involved. It is also often worth contacting these organizations since they will be able to offer information on good observation places. However, don't become too involved in how others think it should be done - birding should always be enjoyable, so the best approach to birding is always the one that suits you.

Red-throated Loon *(below)*

Scientific name: *Gavia stellata*
Length: 25 inches
Habitat: Arctic lakes, coastal areas
Identification: Small seabird. Slender upturned bill, gray back with white spots, white throat
Similar species: Often confused with the Arctic Loon, particularly in winter when the red throat turns white, because of the white plumage on its flanks that extends upwards in a similar way. However, the Arctic Loon is an Old World species that is only seen in America in western Alaska. Distinguished from grebes by a longer body and quite a short neck

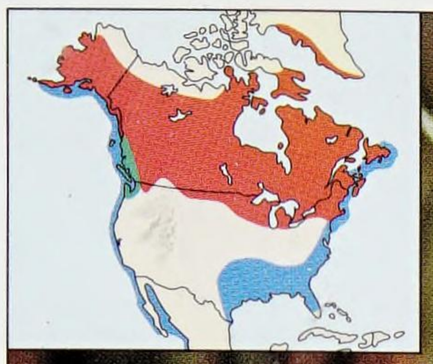
This is the smallest and most slender of the loons, with a thin bill that turns up slightly at the tip; it also tends to hold its head angled slightly upwards. In the summer breeding season the mature adult has dark brown upperparts - without the white checker-pattern seen in other loons - a gray head and brick-red throat that is often hard to see and can look quite dark in flight. Since the red throat only appears during the mating season while the birds are in their Arctic breeding grounds, this species will probably be more familiar in its winter plumage, which is much paler. The throat becomes white and there are extensive white areas on the face, while the gray back is dotted with a profusion of small white spots. The juvenile bird is gray-brown, sometimes with dull red markings on the throat. Nesting and breeding in the Arctic take place on the banks of ponds or lakes. Migration along both east and west coasts is in loose groups or sometimes single birds - this loon never travels in organized flocks. The Red-throated Loon flies with its head drooping slightly, unlike the other species of loon, and is often seen on the Great Lakes in winter, and occasionally inland in western areas. Loons are wonderful divers and very strong swimmers, but they find it difficult to walk on land and appear very clumsy. They catch fish to eat by diving and pursuing them under water.

Pacific Loon

Scientific name: *Gavia pacifica*
Length: 26 inches
Habitat: Arctic lakes, coastal areas
Identification: Medium seabird. Straight bill, dark back, white throat in sharp contrast to dark nape
Similar species: Similar to the Common Loon, but has a much thinner bill and less white around the eyes in winter plumage. In flight, it has smaller feet and head. Also very like the Arctic Loon, but has no white extending upwards onto its flanks and is seen across a much wider area

A medium-size loon, with a slim and straight bill; it holds its smooth, rounded head very level and has a shorter neck than the Red-throated Loon. At one time this bird was thought to be identical to the European Arctic Loon, but they are now considered to be two distinct species. In the summer breeding season the mature adult has a black back with a white checker-pattern and a pale gray head. The throat has an iridescent dark purple-green patch that is very difficult to see and can look black, with a series of white stripes on each side. In winter its plumage is much paler; the throat turns white with a clean straight edge against the darker nape and a thin brown "chin-strap"; the back is plainer without the white checkered markings. In all plumages, there is no white extending upwards onto the rump. The juvenile bird is paler in color than the adult, with a "chin-strap" that can be very faint. Nesting and breeding take place in the Arctic on the banks of ponds or small lakes, and can extend to the east as far round as Hudson Bay. Migration along the west coast is in small organized flocks. The Pacific Loon is rare inland, but is sometimes seen on the east coast. It is more often seen over open ocean or far out in bays, much preferring to be flying above deep water. Like the other species of loon, the Pacific Loon feeds mainly on small fish, occasionally also eating crustaceans and insects.





Common Loon

Scientific name:	*Gavia immer*
Length:	32 inches
Habitat:	Forest lakes, coastal areas
Identification:	Medium seabird. Thick neck and bill, dark plumage, white checker-pattern to back in summer
Similar species:	Resembles the other loons in winter plumage, but has larger head and feet. In summer is like the Yellow-billed Loon, except for the yellow bill. However, the Yellow-billed is much larger and heavier and is rarely seen south of Canada

A large loon, with a thick bill that has a slightly curved upper edge. In the breeding season the mature adult has a distinctive plumage of black back with an extensive white checker-pattern, black head and bill and a black-and-white vertically striped collar and small "chin-strap". In winter the back is much plainer, with the crown and nape rather darker, the nape coloring extending round to the sides of the neck in an uneven line, while the striped collar and "chin-strap" disappear leaving the throat plain white. The bill turns a paler blue-gray although the upper edge still remains very dark. The juvenile bird has coloring similar to the winter adult, but the scapulars have a white scallop pattern, unlike the plainer adult bird. Nesting and breeding take place on large lakes, and this species is still fairly common across both Canada and northern America in summer, although due to pollution and the destruction of the natural wilderness that is its main habitat, its population is declining. Migration is both overland and along the coast, with this species generally flying much higher than the other loons. The Common Loon winters around both the east and west coasts and on any large inland lake that remains free of ice. It can dive down to more than 150 feet in search of fish, and stay below the surface for long periods.



Horned Grebe

Scientific name:	*Podiceps auritus*
Length:	13½ inches
Habitat:	Lakes, ponds, coastal bays
Identification:	Waterbird. Gray plumage with black cap. Turns chestnut-red in summer, with gold feather "horns" on a black head
Similar species:	In winter plumage, looks much like the Eared Grebe, but has white cheeks, a pale spot in front of the eye and a thicker bill. Also resembles the Red-necked Grebe in winter, but is smaller, has a shorter bill and red eyes

The Horned Grebe summers in northern America, and migrates across the country to spend the winter on salt water in coastal bays, or on large ice-free lakes. It is occasionally found in small groups of breeding pairs, but more often in single pairs. The summer plumage is very eye-catching, with a chestnut-red neck and gold feather "horns" on a black head. In the winter months it is rather plainer, with white cheeks and throat, a dark crown and nape and no "horns". Its bill is straight and short, thinner than that of the Pied-billed but thicker than the Eared Grebe's, and its head is larger and flat-topped. The Horned is also slightly heavier and larger than these two species, with a thicker neck. All species of grebe have lobed toes, which makes them very strong swimmers. The Horned Grebe prefers to spend most of its time on water, but is often seen in flight during migration. Its nest is a floating raft of plants, anchored in reeds to stop it drifting away. The chicks are strong swimmers but are often carried on their parents' backs. The Horned Grebe feeds mainly on small fish and tadpoles, which it catches by diving.

Red-necked Grebe

Scientific name:	*Podiceps grisegena*
Length:	20 inches
Habitat:	Shallow lakes, coastal areas in winter
Identification:	Medium-sized waterbird. Gray neck and face with white crescent ear patch. In summer, red neck, black crown and a gray face edged in white
Similar species:	In winter plumage, looks similar to the Horned and Eared grebes, but is bigger than both and has a long, tapered yellow bill and black eyes. In summer resembles the Western and Clark's grebes, but can be distinguished by its red neck

The Red-necked Grebe is not common, but it is seen in summer on marshy ponds and shallow lakes in the northwest. It spends the winter in small groups around coastal bays or on deep open water, particularly if food is plentiful, but it is more often a solitary bird. Afloat it looks stocky, with a short body and a large head. In summer its plumage is handsome, with a red neck, black crown, a gray face edged in white and a tuft of black feathers giving the head a triangular shape. In winter the red neck turns pale gray, with a crescent of white running from under the chin round the rear of the face. Its bill is almost as long as the head, heavy, tapered and yellow in color. The juvenile bird has a striped head. Like other grebes, the Red-necked is not built for walking on land or long flights and spends most of its time on water. The Red-necked Grebe feeds mainly on small fish and tadpoles and newts, which it catches by diving. It also often swallows feathers - as do the other species of grebe - probably to enable it to strain out fish bones and other undigested material and regurgitate this unwanted matter.





Pied-billed Grebe

Scientific name:	*Podilymbus podiceps*
Length:	13½ inches
Habitat:	Freshwater ponds, marshes, lakes
Identification:	Diving waterbird. Drab brown plumage, black bill ring and throat in summer
Similar species:	Sometimes seen with other waterfowl, but its black striped bill in the summer months makes it unmistakable

Over much of its range the Pied-billed Grebe is a permanent resident and is very common, although it is usually seen on its own or in pairs rather than in flocks. It occasionally mixes with other waterfowl, but in general is somewhat secretive and elusive. A compact bird with a short neck, its plumage is a rather drab brown throughout the year, although in winter the lower throat has a reddish tint. In the summer, its thick bill turns white with a distinctive white ring, while its white chin and upper throat become black. The juvenile bird has very similar plumage to the winter adult, but the neck is streaked with brown and white. The Pied-billed Grebe is rarely seen on land or in flight, preferring to spend most of its time on water. When threatened, it can sink below the surface of the water with only its head showing, like a submarine with the periscope up, or dive completely beneath the surface. Its nest is a floating raft of marsh plants, anchored to reeds or bushes in the water, and young hatchlings are carried and fed on either parent's back. Although this species breeds across America, the birds in northern areas retreat south to spend winter on open water with no danger of ice. Like many other grebes, the Pied-billed feeds on fish, crustaceans and insects.

Western Grebe

Scientific name: *Aechmophorus occidentalis*
Length: 25 inches
Habitat: Freshwater lakes, inshore coastal areas
Identification: Large long-necked grebe. Black above, white below, long thin yellow bill
Similar species: So similar to Clark's Grebe that they were once considered one species. Can be told apart only by the Western Grebe's yellow-green bill and its black cap that extends down round the eyes. Also similar to loons in winter plumage, but have a much longer neck and bill

The Western Grebe, North America's largest grebe, is an elegant bird that is seen on freshwater lakes in western America and winters around the west coast on sheltered bays and open inland waters. It covers roughly the same area as Clark's Grebe, but is far more numerous in the north and east. Its neck is long and slender, its bill long, thin and a dull yellow-green. The head, neck and body are black above and white below, and the black cap on its head extends down below the eyes. It performs a spectacular courtship dance, each pair racing across the water, diving and then rearing up out of the water in a mirror image of each other; several hundred birds may display together. It migrates in loose flocks, that spread out to feed during the day. When leaving the floating nest to reach the feeding grounds, the adult birds dive and swim underwater to get past the defended territory of other nesting pairs. Both parents care for the eggs and feed the chicks. The Western Grebe feeds on fish, insects and small crustaceans and can be badly affected by chemicals that have accumulated in their food, and also by oil spills.



Clark's Grebe

Scientific name: *Aechmophorus clarkii*
Length: 25 inches
Habitat: Freshwater lakes, coastal areas
Identification: Large long-necked grebe. Black above, white below, long thin yellow-orange bill
Similar species: Very like the Western Grebe, and once considered one species. Clark's Grebe has a yellow-orange bill and its black cap finishes above the eyes. Also similar to loons in winter plumage, but has a much longer neck and bill

Clark's Grebe is a close relative of the Western Grebe and they were once considered to be one species. They cover much the same area, but Clark's is much less common in the north and eastern parts of their range. Clark's Grebe inhabits freshwater lakes in western America during the summer and migrates to winter around the west coast on sheltered bays, inlets and open inland water. The adult has a slate-black cap that stops just above the eyes, and a slate-black neck and upperparts with white below. The neck is long and slender, the bill long, thin and yellow-orange. Clark's Grebe is as large as the Western, and performs the same kind of courtship dance, each pair of birds mirroring each other as they race across the water. Several hundred birds may gathered together, so the display can be quite a show. Clark's also migrates in loose flocks, but spreads out while feeding. Both parents care for the eggs and feed the chicks on the floating nest; after they hatch, the young birds are often carried on their parents' backs. Clark's Grebe feeds mainly on fish, insects and small crustaceans and, like the Western, can be badly affected by chemicals and by oil spills.



Eared Grebe

Scientific name: *Podiceps nigricollis*
Length: 12½ inches
Habitat: Freshwater lakes
Identification: Small grebe. Gray plumage with black cap, white crescent ear patch. In summer, black neck and feathery gold "ears" on either side of black head
Similar species: In winter plumage, looks much like the Horned Grebe, but has black cheeks, no pale spot in front of the eye and a thinner bill that is upturned rather than straight

The Eared Grebe is often very common, nesting in colonies on freshwater lakes in western America and wintering in the south in large flocks, but it is rarely seen in the east. Its summer plumage is distinctive, with a black neck and feathery gold "ears" on either side of its black head, and a black back with red below. In the winter months the feathery tufts disappear and its dark cheeks contrast with a whitish throat and chin, which extends up in a crescent round the cheeks; the back remains dark but the red beneath becomes white. Its bill is long and thin and curved upwards, and its head is rather round with a peaked crown. The Eared Grebe prefers to spend most of its time on water, but rides higher in the water than some of the other grebes, exposing its white undertail. Its nest is a very untidy floating raft of marsh plants at the edge of water but with little apparent attempt at concealment; the parents may build several before settling on the final version. Both parents incubate the eggs and feed the chicks. The Eared Grebe migrates during the night, and feeds mainly on insects as well as small crustaceans. In the late 19th century its summer plumage was a highly-prized fashion accessory and many thousands of nesting birds were destroyed, but now it is under protection.



Greater Shearwater

Scientific name: *Puffinus gravis*
Length: 19 inches, wingspan 44 inches
Habitat: Off the Atlantic coast
Identification: Medium-sized seabird. Thin black bill, dark gray-brown and white plumage
Similar species: Cory's Shearwater has similar coloring, although smudgier and less defined and with a yellowish bill, but Cory's prefers warmer water so is rarely seen off America.The Greater Shearwater is often also confused with the Black-capped Petrel, which has a smaller black cap, more white on collar and rump, a longer tail and a black bar on its underwing.

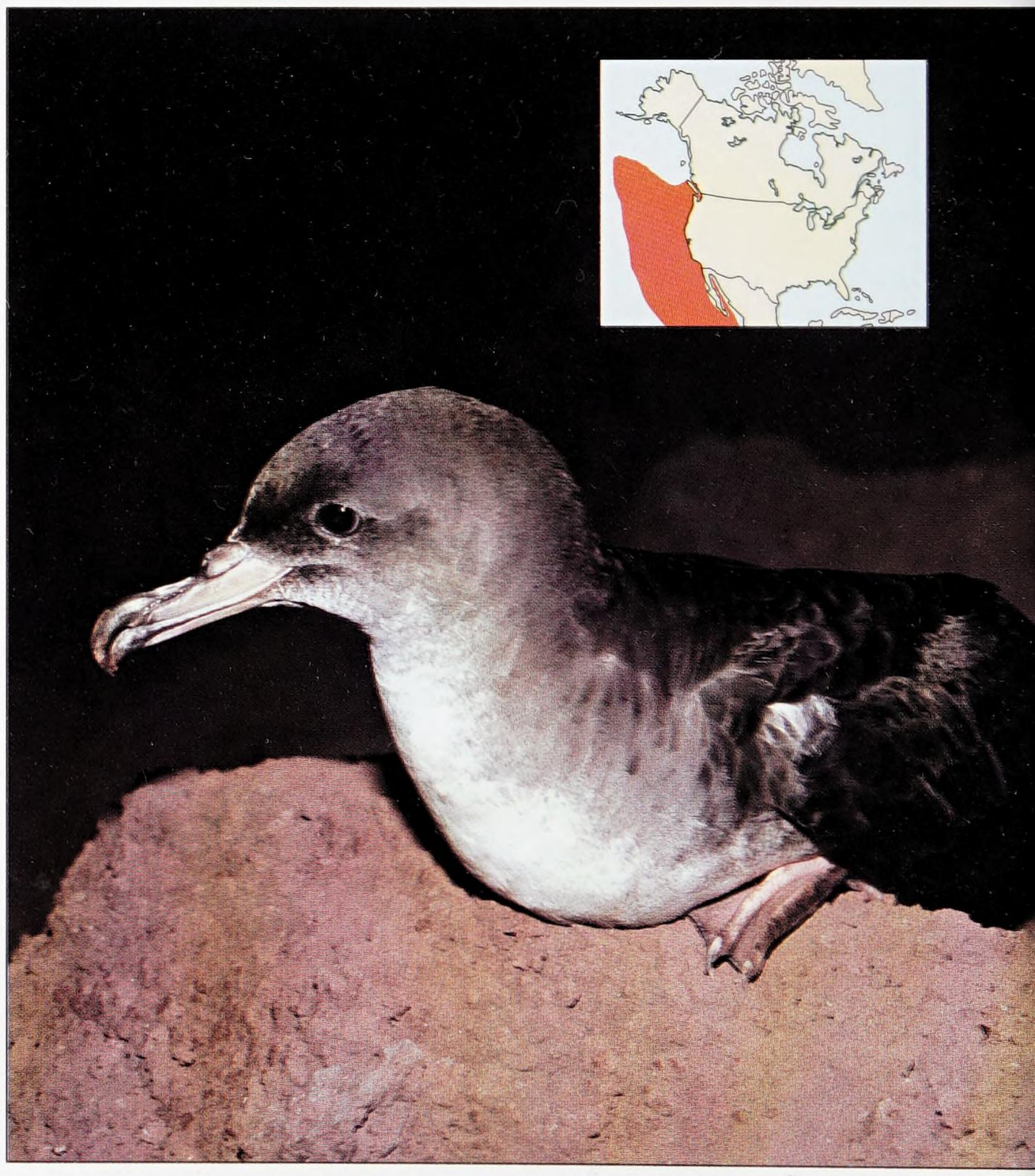
The Greater Shearwater moves into offshore waters along the Atlantic coast during spring through fall, and is rare during the winter months. It is most common during spring in the south and in summer off eastern Canada - although it prefers open ocean and is seldom seen from shore. It nests in colonies in the South Atlantic, mainly on remote islands. Its plumage is sharply contrasting, with a distinct black cap against a white face and throat, dark brown above with a white band above the tail and often also at the nape, white below with black marks under the base of the wing and a blurred dark patch on the belly. Its bill is thin and black and it has straight, narrow, pointed wings. Greater Shearwaters often soar just inches above the surface of the water as they search for small fish and crustaceans to eat and are one of the few shearwaters that will dive into the water after food. They often follow fishing boats for scraps tossed overboard, and when this happens their graceful flight descends into a melee of flapping wings and slashing bills as dozens of birds fight for the best portion.



Pink-footed Shearwater

Scientific name: *Puffinus creatopus*
Length: 19 inches, wingspan 43 inches
Habitat: Off the Pacific coast
Identification: Medium-sized seabird. Pinkish bill with black tip, gray-brown and white plumage
Similar species: The Sooty Shearwater has similar coloring, but is smaller, has darker underparts and a black bill, and flies with faster wingbeats. The Black-vented Shearwater also has the same coloring, but is a much smaller bird

This shearwater appears from spring through fall off the west coast of America, although it is rare during the winter months. It is most common in fall, when thousands can congregate in a few favorite feeding places - although it prefers the open ocean and is seldom seen from shore. It nests in colonies in the southern hemisphere, mainly on the smaller islands off the Chilean coast. About the size of a gull, the Pink-footed Shearwater is dark gray-brown above and white below, has white underwings with dark borders, and a pinkish black-tipped bill and pink feet. The pink feet and the pink on the bill are both quite distinctive at close range. Both sexes have the same coloring, but during May to July this species may undergo a rapid molt, which can result in odd wing shapes, unusual white wing bars and white patches. Unlike other light-bellied shearwaters along the west coast, the Pink-footed flies with slow wingbeats followed by a long glide - often staying close to the surface of the water as they search for small fish and crustaceans to eat. They catch these by alighting on the water and dipping their bills, and also occasionally by diving.

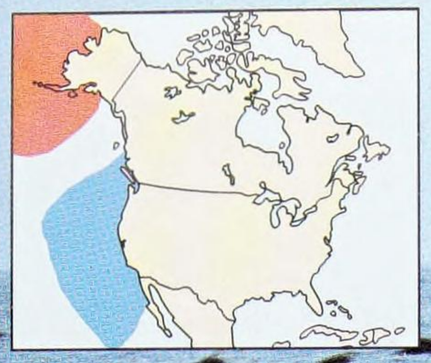




Northern Fulmar

Scientific name:	*Fulmarus glacialis*
Length:	19 inches, wingspan 42 inches
Habitat:	Offshore, coastal cliffs
Identification:	Medium-sized seabird. Rounded yellow bill, gray and white plumage
Similar species:	Often mistaken for a medium-sized gull, but has longer wings and the bill is shorter and has distinctive nostril tubes. Gulls tend to fly with a steady flapping, while the Fulmar's flight consists of rapid wingbeats alternating with a stiff-winged glide

The Northern Fulmar is related to the shearwater family and is common and increasing, but spends much of its time far out to sea. It can sometimes be seen following fishing boats for scraps, or looking for food around harbors and piers. Otherwise the fulmar only comes into land to nest on the cliffs of northern islands and along the Arctic coast, where it lays just one egg in a shallow depression lined with a thin layer of soil or a few blades of grass. Its coloring is very variable; the darkest birds are a dark smoky-gray all over, with just a lighter patch at the base of the primaries; the lightest ones are very light gray above and white beneath, and there are many intermediate color versions. Darker birds tend to predominate on the Aleutians and off south Alaska, while the lighter version is more common around the Bering Sea. The lighter birds do look very similar to gulls, but their stiff-winged flight style and way of banking and skimming low over the water is very different. Above the stubby, hooked, yellow bill, the nostrils are encased in a tube and work in conjunction with special glands to filter out excess salt, to allow the bird to drink seawater. When disturbed, the Northern Fulmar can regurgitate an unpleasant and smelly oil, which was once collected both to fuel lamps and as a cure for various illnesses.



Short-tailed Shearwater *(above)*

Scientific name:	*Puffinus tenuirostris*
Length:	17 inches, wingspan 41 inches
Habitat:	Offshore
Identification:	Medium-sized seabird. Rounded head, short black bill, dark gray-brown plumage
Similar species:	The Sooty Shearwater has similar coloring, but has a longer bill, tapering forehead and a silvery-white patch on the underside of the wing

This shearwater is often one of the most abundant to be seen off the Pacific coast, appearing from spring through fall - although only rarely during the winter months except very occasionally off California. Like the Sooty Shearwater, it is most common in the summer, when flocks of millions of birds can congregate in one place - mainly around British Columbia and Alaska - and it is one of the few shearwaters that can usually be seen from the shore. It nests in colonies deep in the southern hemisphere, mainly in Tasmania and on islands off the Australian coast. The Short-tailed Shearwater is generally a uniform dark gray-brown all over, although some birds may have a pale throat and a darker cap. It has a rounded head, short tail and a short black bill. Both sexes have the same coloring. Like other shearwaters, the Short-tailed is rather clumsy on land but flies very gracefully, gliding and planing close to the surface of the water as it searches for small fish and crustaceans to eat. When migrating north after breeding it flies halfway round the world, first moving up towards Japan, then across to Alaska, returning south along the Pacific coast of America, crossing the Fiji Islands and then returning to Tasmania.

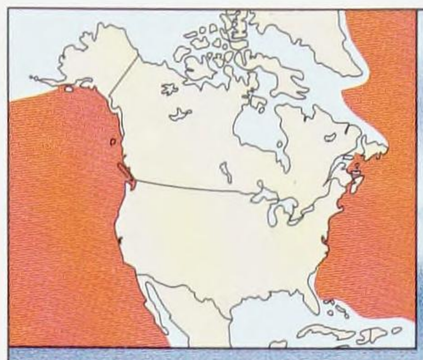
Black-vented Shearwater

Scientific name:	*Puffinus opisthomelas*
Length:	14 inches, wingspan 34 inches
Habitat:	Offshore
Identification:	Small-sized seabird. Black bill, gray-brown and white plumage
Similar species:	The Pink-footed Shearwater has very similar coloring, but has pink feet and bill, rather than black, and is a much bigger bird. Could also be mistaken for Audubon's Shearwater, although Audubon's is smaller, has more defined coloring and is an east coast species

The Black-vented Shearwater is not a world traveler like some of the other shearwaters. It is seen along the Californian coast from August to May, but it moves farther and in much bigger flocks during years when the water is warmer. Although it likes the open ocean, it tends to stay close to the coast and is quite often seen from the shore. It returns south to nest on the islands off the Baja peninsular in June and July. It was formerly considered a sub-species of the Manx Shearwater, a bird of the eastern Atlantic that is sometimes seen along America's east coast. The Black-vented Shearwater is dark brown above and white below, with dark undertail coverts. The face and throat have variable dark mottling, which extends down the side of the breast and sometimes across the front, and this species has a black bill and feet. Both sexes have the same coloring. Unlike other light-bellied shearwaters along the west coast, the Black-vented flies with fast wingbeats, gliding and turning above the water. It usually plucks its food from the surface but occasionally dives after a particularly tasty morsel.

Sooty Shearwater

Scientific name: *Puffinus griseus*
Length: 18 inches, wingspan 41 inches
Habitat: Offshore
Identification: Medium-sized seabird. Thin black bill, dark gray-brown plumage, white underwing
Similar species: The Pink-footed Shearwater has similar coloring, but is larger, has white underparts and a pink, black tipped bill, and flies with slower wingbeats. The Short-tailed Shearwater also has similar coloring, but has a smaller bill, rounder head and lacks the silvery-white patch on the underside of the wing



This shearwater is often one of the most abundant off the Pacific coast and is also common on the Atlantic, appearing from spring through fall but not during the winter months except off California. It is most common in summer, when millions of birds can congregate in gigantic flocks - it is one of the few shearwaters that can be seen regularly from shore. It nests in colonies deep in the southern hemisphere, mainly on the smaller, more isolated islands. The Sooty Shearwater is a uniform dark gray-brown all over, except for a silvery-white area on the underwings, and has a tapering forehead and a thin black bill. Both sexes have the same coloring. The Sooty flies in a typical shearwater way, gliding and planing close to the surface of the water as it searches for small fish and crustaceans to eat. Since shearwaters fly great distances when migrating, they have developed a technique of both picking up thermal currents and riding the wind itself, which means they can fly for hours on almost motionless wings - although when the air is still they are forced to sit on the water and wait for a passing breeze.

Audubon's Shearwater

Scientific name: *Puffinus lherminieri*
Length: 12 inches, wingspan 28 inches
Habitat: Offshore
Identification: Small seabird. Black bill, white spot in front of eye, black-brown and white plumage
Similar species: The Black-vented Shearwater is very similar, but is slightly bigger, has more smudgy coloring and is a west coast species seen at somewhat different times of the year. The Manx Shearwater has quite close coloring, except for a white tail covert, but prefers cold water so is rarely seen in the southern Atlantic



Audubon's Shearwater is commonly seen along the southern Atlantic coast from May through October and prefers warm water. During the winter months, it returns south to its nesting grounds on islands in the Caribbean. It nests in colonies, creating a mass of grass among rocks or in dense vegetation to hold the single egg. Both parents care for the young, which stay in the nest for about 10 weeks after hatching. Audubon's is the smallest American shearwater; its plumage is very dark brown to black above and white below, with dark undertail coverts and a long tail. The wings are relatively short, with the undersides of the primaries dark, the white throat extends up into the face and there is a white spot in front of the eye. Both sexes have the same coloring. Audubon's Shearwater flies with very fast wingbeats and quite short glides low above the water. It eats squid and fish, but is one of the few shearwaters that is not seen following ships.

Wilson's Storm-Petrel *(below)*

Scientific name: *Oceanites oceanicus*
Length: 7 inches, wingspan 15 inches
Habitat: Offshore
Identification: Ocean bird. Dark plumage, square tail. In flight feet extend beyond tail, broad white band on rump, shallow fluttering wingbeats
Similar species: Identification of the different types of storm-petrel is often very difficult. Wilson's and Leach's storm-petrel are very similar, but Leach's has longer and more sharply angled wings, a forked tail, and flies with deep strokes, while Wilson's has short, fluttering wingbeats

Wilson's Storm-Petrel is very common off the Atlantic coast between May and September, can very occasionally be seen off the Gulf coast, and is very rare off California in the fall. A bird of the open sea, which nests in colonies on islands well down in the Southern Hemisphere, it can sometimes be seen during deep-water fishing trips. During the summer it is active during daylight hours, but is nocturnal at its nesting grounds. It lays one egg in a rocky crevice or in a burrow in soil, which is incubated by both birds. The plumage of this storm-petrel is mostly black, with lighter areas in the center underwing and on the tips of the wing coverts and a bold white band across the rump that extends underneath across the undertail coverts. Its flight is distinctive, with rather shallow, fluttering wingbeats and its feet trailing behind, often extending beyond the tip of the tail. One of the smaller seabirds, it tends to hover quite close over the surface of the water when feeding, with its wings held upwards in a V, and pattering its feet on the surface as it plucks up small fish and plankton. It also sometimes takes refuse thrown from ships.

Leach's Storm-Petrel

Scientific name: *Oceanodroma leucorhoa*
Length: $8\frac{1}{2}$ inches, wingspan 18 inches
Habitat: Offshore
Identification: Ocean bird. Dark plumage, long forked tail, pointed wings, deep wingbeats
Similar species: Identification of the different types of storm-petrel is often very difficult. Wilson's and Leach's storm-petrel are very similar, but Leach's has longer and more sharply angled wings, a forked tail, and flies with deep strokes, while Wilson's has short, fluttering wingbeats

Leach's Storm-Petrel is fairly common off both the east and west coasts of American in the summer, but is very rare towards the southern Atlantic and round the Gulf. It prefers the open sea, and nests in colonies on offshore islands, but is more usually seen as a single bird following a boat. It is nocturnal at its nesting grounds and lays one egg in a burrow dug by the male, which is incubated by both birds. The plumage of this species of storm-petrel varies in different areas. It is mostly brown-black, with a lighter band along the tips of the wing coverts. All the Atlantic birds and those in the north Pacific have a bold white band across the rump, but those further south than California on the Pacific coast often have a dark rump. However the white is not visible when the bird is sitting. Its flight is very distinctive and erratic, with deep strokes of its pointed wings; its wings are quite long and it holds them rather sharply angled. Although slightly larger than Wilson's Storm-Petrel, it is still one of the smaller seabirds. Leach's Storm-Petrel feeds by plucking up small fish and shrimp from the water, while hovering just above the surface. It also sometimes follows ships to take the rubbish that is thrown overboard.

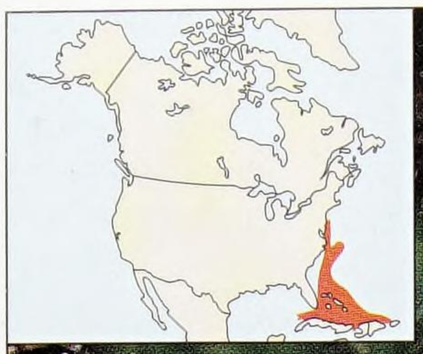




Fork-tailed Storm-Petrel

Scientific name: *Oceanodroma furcata*
Length: $8\frac{1}{2}$ inches, wingspan 18 inches
Habitat: Offshore
Identification: Ocean bird. Pale gray plumage, forked tail
Similar species: Among storm-petrels, the Fork-tailed is quite distinctive, as it has quite pale gray-colored plumage. However it could be confused with the Red Phalarope, which spends time out at sea, although this has a longer, pointed bill and white round the face and throat

The Fork-tailed Storm-Petrel prefers to be over cold water and is seen only along the northern Pacific coast of America, being fairly numerous off Alaska and western Canada. It nests in colonies on offshore islands, but visits the nest only at night. It is rather stocky and broadwinged and is comparable in size with other storm-petrels. Its plumage is a striking blue-gray above and smooth pearly-gray beneath, with much darker underwing coverts and eye-patch. The tail is quite long and forked, and the bird carries it upswept in flight. It flies in a fairly straight line with quick and shallow wingbeats; often followed by a short glide, but adverse weather conditions can affect this pattern quite considerably. The Fork-tailed Storm-Petrel feeds by plucking up small fish, shrimp and plankton from the surface of the water as it flies along, but also sometimes makes shallow dives beneath the surface.



White-tailed Tropicbird

Scientific name:	*Phaethon lepturus*
Length:	30 inches (including tail streamers), wingspan 37 inches
Habitat:	Offshore
Identification:	Tropical seabird. White plumage with long tail streamers, black stripe across upper wing, black tip to wings
Similar species:	The Red-billed Tropicbird is similar coloring, but much larger and lacks the distinctive black stripe along the edge of the upperwing coverts. Royal Terns are sometimes mistaken for tropicbirds, but they have a less direct and more bouncing flight pattern and lack tail streamers

This tropical seabird is common in Bermuda, but is only an occasional visitor to North America - although it is sometimes seen in summer in the Gulf Stream off North Carolina and off Florida, and sometimes off the southeast coast. It nests on tropical islands, where it lays its single egg in a rock crevice or a cave, or sometimes just under vegetation near the shore. The young chicks hatch after around 40 days and stay in the nest for about nine weeks. The White-tailed Tropicbird is the smaller of the two species that are commonly seen. Its plumage is mostly white, with tail streamers that are as long as the bird again - although these are sometimes missing. The tip of the wing is black, there is also a distinctive black stripe across the upper wing, and a small black patch around the eye; its rather short bill is orange or yellow. The juvenile bird lacks the distinctive wing stripe and its back is roughly barred, so it can very easily be mistaken for a Red-billed Tropicbird. The White-tailed flies steadily and high, with quick, flicking wingbeats. It sometimes rests on the sea and floats well out of the water with its tail streamers raised up into the air. It feeds on fish, squid and crustaceans, which it catches by suddenly plunging into the water from the air.

Red-billed Tropicbird

Scientific name: *Phaethon aethereus*
Length: 40 inches (including tail streamers), wingspan 44 inches
Habitat: Offshore
Identification: Large seabird. White plumage with long tail streamers, black tip to wings, red bill
Similar species: The White-tailed Tropicbird is similar coloring, but much smaller, has a distinctive black stripe along the edge of the upperwing coverts and a yellow-orange bill. Royal Terns are sometimes mistaken for tropicbirds, but they have a less direct and more bouncing flight pattern and lack tail streamers

The Red-billed Tropicbird is a tropical species that is an occasional visitor off the coast of southern California in summer and fall, and is sometimes seen off the southeast coast. It nests in the Caribbean and along the Pacific coast of Mexico, where it lays its single egg in a burrow or cave near the shore. The young chicks hatch after around 44 days and stay in the nest for about 12 weeks. The Red-billed Tropicbird is considerably larger than the White-tailed. Its plumage is mostly white, but its back is finely barred in black and it has black primary coverts and a small black patch around the eye; its red bill is larger than that of the White-tailed. The tail has white streamers as long again as the body of the bird - although they are sometimes missing. The young bird lacks the tail streamers and its bill is yellowish, and the juveniles of both species can very easily be mistaken for each other. The Red-billed flies quite high, with relatively fast, steady and shallow wingbeats. When resting on the water, both species float high with tail streamers raised up into the air. The Red-billed Tropicbird feeds on fish and squid, which it catches by diving from the air into the water.



Brown Booby *(right)*

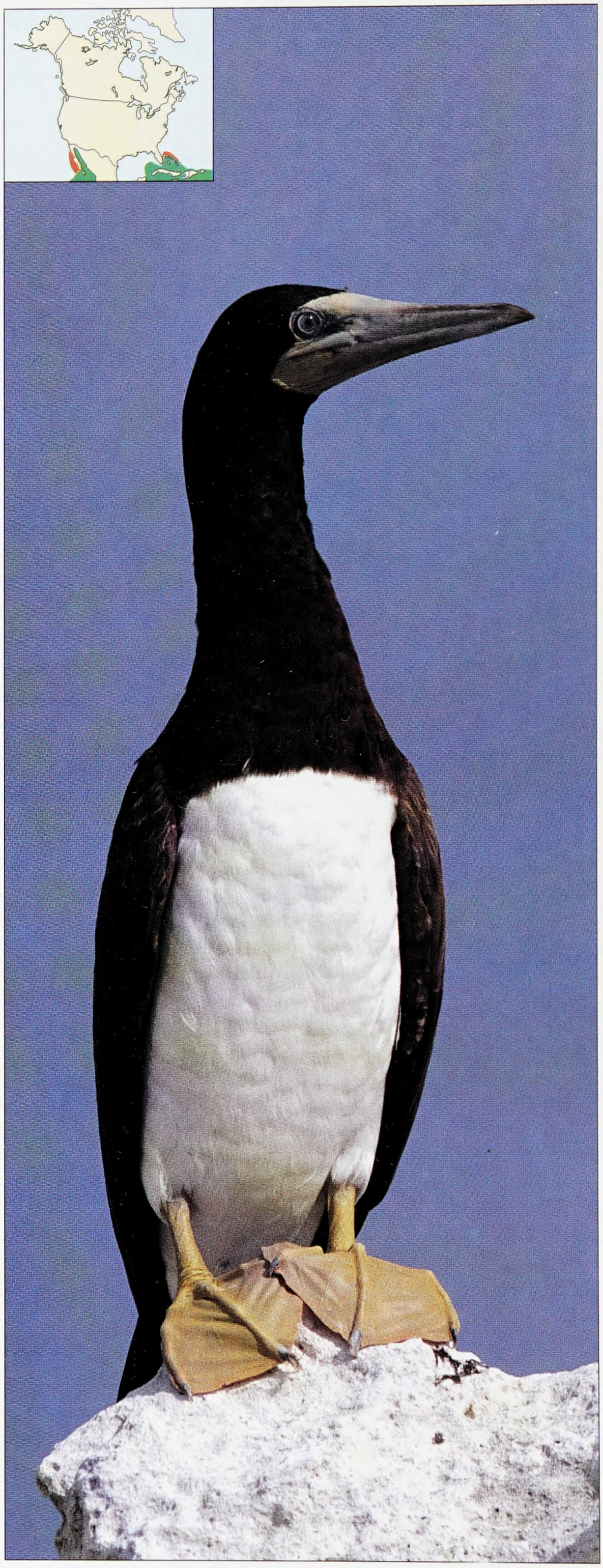
Scientific name: *Sula leucogaster*
Length: 30 inches, wingspan 57 inches
Habitat: Offshore
Identification: Large seashore bird. Chocolate brown, sharply defined pure white belly, pointed yellow bill, bright yellow feet
Similar species: When flying close to the surface of the water, Brown Boobies may be mistaken for the darker shearwaters, but they dive for fish, rather than dipping for food

A tropical seabird, but found at sea off southern Florida and around Dry Tortugas in summer and very occasionally off the southern Pacific coast. The Brown Booby is often seen perching on channel markers, navigational towers and sometimes trees. It breeds in the Southern Hemisphere; the adult does not build a nest but lays 1-3 eggs on bare ground or rocks, often very near the edge of a cliff. Both birds incubate the eggs, which takes about 6 weeks, with the hatchlings staying in the nest for around 15 weeks. The Brown Booby is smaller than the Masked but has the typical booby shape. Its plumage is a uniform dull chocolate brown, with a sharply defined contrasting pure white belly, a heavy, pointed yellow bill and bright yellow feet. Its pointed wings are relatively short, with white on the underwing, and its tail is quite long - although this is not necessarily very evident. The female has the same general coloring as the male, but has a yellow face similar to the bill color. The juvenile bird has a brown mottled belly, or may be an even brown all over. The Brown Booby flies with strong swift wingbeats, sometimes diving straight down into the sea from a height, but also flying low over the water and entering in a low-angle dive.

Northern Gannet

Scientific name: *Morus bassanus*
Length: 37 inches, wingspan 72 inches
Habitat: Offshore, rocky cliffs
Identification: Large seabird. Snow-white plumage, yellow tint to back of head, long, black-tipped wings, pointed white tail
Similar species: The mature adult is like the Masked Booby, but is bigger, has much less black on the wings, a white tail, no black mask and a yellow tinge to the back of the head. First-year birds can be very similar to immature Masked Boobies

The Northern Gannet is the biggest seabird found off the Atlantic coast; it prefers to be out at sea, but can be seen from the shore during migration and in winter. It nests in dense colonies on isolated rocky cliffs or islands around the Gulf of St Lawrence, but in winter can spread as far south as the Gulf of Mexico. The adult lays a single egg in its large nest of seaweed and debris, and both birds incubate the eggs. The Northern Gannet sometimes rests on the water, but is never seen on land except at the breeding site. Its plumage is predominantly pure snow-white, with a yellow tint to the back of the head, long, black-tipped wings and a pointed white tail. Its gray bill is sharp and pointed. The juvenile bird is gray-brown all over, with white uppertail coverts and white speckles that gradually increase until it achieves mature plumage after around 3-4 years. The Northern Gannet makes spectacular dives to catch fish - it can dive from more than 100 feet and reach a similar depth below the surface.

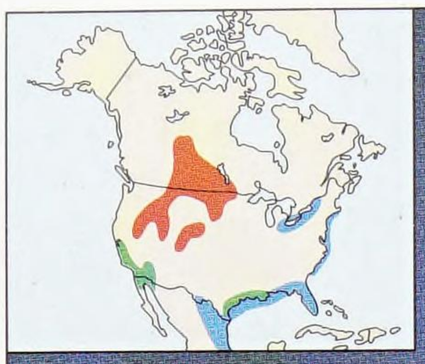




Masked Booby

Scientific name:	*Sula dactylatra*
Length:	32 inches, wingspan 62 inches
Habitat:	Offshore
Identification:	Tropical seabird. White plumage, black mask, black tail, much black on wings, large pointed yellow bill
Similar species:	The mature adult is like the Northern Gannet, but has more black on the wings, a black tail, black mask and yellow bill. When flying close to the surface of the water boobies may be mistaken for shearwaters, but otherwise their flight pattern is different

A bird of tropical seas, but a regular visitor to American waters that is usually seen off the Gulf of Mexico in summer and sometimes offshore from the southern Atlantic coast. It nests in the Southern Hemisphere, but there is also a breeding colony on Dry Tortugas, Florida. The adult lays 1-3 eggs on bare ground or rocks, and both birds incubate the eggs. Unlike the Brown Booby, when resting the Masked Booby sometimes perches on the ground. Its plumage is predominantly white, but with a black mask, quite short black tail and a great deal of solid black along the trailing edge of the wings. Its yellow bill is relatively large and pointed. The juvenile bird has a dark head and wings, but a white collar, chest and underneath - they can look a lot like young gannets, except they have more white on the underwing. Boobies fish from high in the air, making spectacular dives into the water to catch fish. Sometimes Frigatebirds harass them in flight, forcing them to drop their catch which the Frigatebird then grabs as it falls.



American White Pelican

Scientific name: *Pelecanus erythrorhynchos*
Length: 62 inches, wingspan 108 inches
Habitat: Seawater, large lakes
Identification: Large waterbird. White plumage, black on trailing edge of wings, large yellow pouched bill
Similar species: The shape of the pelican and its huge bill make it almost unmistakable, although in flight its wing pattern might look similar to the Wood Stork

With its nine-foot wingspan, the American White Pelican is a massive bird, which can be seen in many areas of North America at different times of the year. A sociable waterbird, it is often found in flocks either along the coast or on large lakes. It nests near water, building a large nest mound to hold its two eggs. The chicks have no feathers when they hatch, so the parent bird must protect them from the sun's rays. The mature adult's plumage is mostly white, with black along the trailing edge of the wings, which is only evident when the bird is flying. The huge, flat bill is bright orange, and during the breeding season a fibrous plate grows on the upper mandible, which is shed after the eggs are laid. The breeding adult also has a yellowish crest, which again vanishes after the eggs are laid; the crown and nape turn a gray-white while the adult is still caring for its chicks. The juvenile bird has a brownish tint to the head, neck and back. The pelican is rather ungainly on land but is handsome in flight; flocks often fly together, soaring high in unison. It eats fish, which it scoops up in its bill, filling its huge throat pouch as it swims along the water. The bill and throat pouch can hold nearly 3 gallons of water - which is more than twice the capacity of its stomach. Flocks may also hunt together, lining up in a row to drive fish into the shallows where they cannot escape.





Brown Pelican

Scientific name: *Pelecanus occidentalis*
Length: 50 inches, wingspan 84 inches
Habitat: Seawater
Identification: Large waterbird. Gray-brown plumage, white head, large gray pouched bill
Similar species: The shape and coloring of the Brown Pelican, and its huge bill, make it unmistakable

Unlike the American White Pelican, the Brown Pelican is a sea bird, which very rarely finds its way inland. It can be found in the south, down both the Atlantic and Pacific coasts of America - although the east coast birds tend to be smaller than the west coast. A sociable bird, it tends to stay in flocks and can be seen flying in a single file over water. It builds a bulky nest of sticks lined with fresh green plants near water, to hold its 2-3 eggs. The mature adult's plumage is gray-brown, with a white head sometimes washed with yellow and a darker belly. The huge, flat bill is gray, and the throat pouch is normally a gray-brown, although during the December to August breeding season that of the Pacific coast birds turns bright red. On both coasts, the back of the neck in the breeding adult changes color to a dark chestnut-brown, while a yellow patch appears at the base of the throat. The juvenile bird is grayish-brown, with off-white underparts and it does not achieve its full adult plumage until the third year. In flight, the Brown Pelican alternately flaps and glides with its broad, powerful wings. It eats fish, which it catches by making a spectacular twisting headfirst plunge of up to 30 feet into the sea, grabbing the fish in its bill. It comes to the surface to eat, tossing the fish into the air to swallow it headfirst. Unfortunately, it sometimes loses its lunch at that point to a cheeky gull, which darts by and snatches the fish in mid-air. Once severely threatened by pesticides, the Brown Pelican made a comeback after DDT was banned.





Great Cormorant

(left)

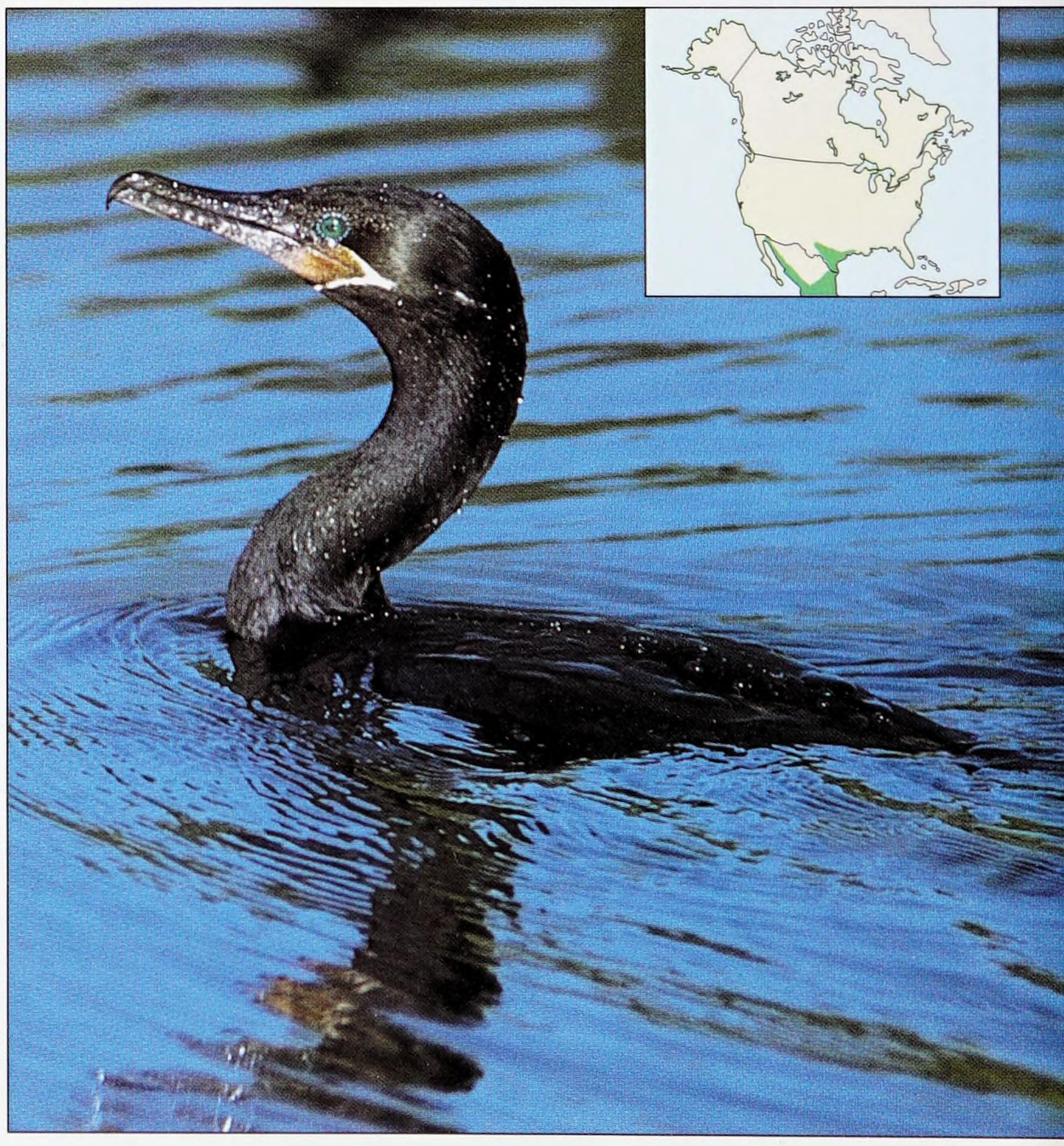
Scientific name: *Phalacrocorax carbo*
Length: 36 inches, wingspan 63 inches
Habitat: Seawater, bays, rocky coasts
Identification: Waterbird. Hook-tipped bill, black plumage, broad white band across throat, yellow throat pouch. In breeding season large white patches on each flank, wispy white plumes on head
Similar species: The Double-crested Cormorant has very similar plumage, but is smaller and the breeding bird has an orange throat pouch and lacks white patches on its flanks. Cormorants are occasionally mistaken for loons, but have longer tails, a different bill and fly with shallower wingbeats

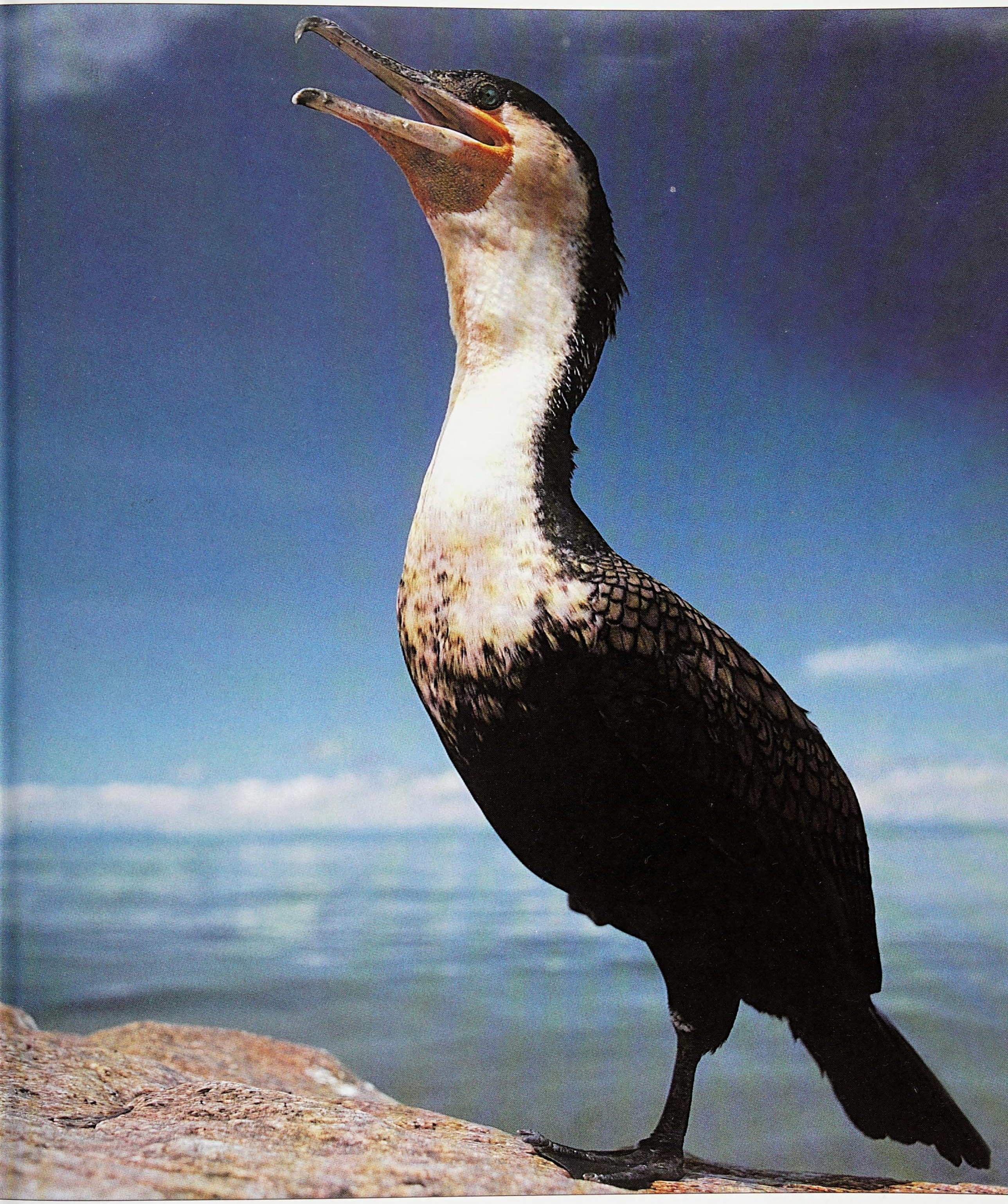
A bird that is widespread in the Old World, the Great Cormorant is also found in northeastern North America. It is seen in large flocks just offshore, but a few single birds also venture inland. Some birds breed in colonies on the east coast of Canada, building nests of sticks and seaweed on remote, rocky ledges. The 4-5 eggs are incubated for around 30 days, by both adult birds, and the young chicks stay in the nest for around 7-8 weeks. The adult bird is large and bulky, with a short tail, a large, squarish head and a thick, hook-tipped bill that is held pointing upward when it swims. Its plumage is black, with a broad white band across the throat behind a lemon-yellow throat pouch; during the breeding season it develops large white patches on each flank and wispy white plumes on the head. The juvenile bird is brown, with a darker brown back and white belly, and its throat pouch is dull yellow. The Great Cormorant tends to fly in long lines or in V-formation. It feeds on fish, which it catches by diving down from the surface of the water. Like other cormorants, it sometimes swims submerged up to its neck.

Neotropic Cormorant

Scientific name: *Phalacrocorax brasilianus*
Length: 26 inches, wingspan 40 inches
Habitat: Marshy ponds, shallow inlets, lakes
Identification: Waterbird. Hook-tipped bill, black plumage, yellow throat pouch. In breeding season pouch edged in white
Similar species: Similar coloring to the Double-crested Cormorant, but is smaller, has a longer tail and the smaller, pointed throat pouch does not extend round the eye

The Neotropic Cormorant is found in the American tropics, and is common in Texas and elsewhere in the southwest. It was previously known as the Olivaceous Cormorant. It often nests in the same areas as the Double-crested, in colonies in trees near lakes, ponds or marshes. Unlike other cormorants, it can easily perch on slender branches. The nest is a mass of sticks up to 20 feet above the ground, with 3-6 eggs. The adult bird is slender, with a noticeably long tail, a small head and a shorter bill than other cormorants. Its plumage is black, with a small yellow throat pouch that goes to a point behind the bill and is bordered with white in the breeding season. The juvenile bird is brown, including its breast and neck, with a darker brown back. Like the Double-crested Cormorant it tends to fly high in long lines or in V-formation. When flying, the Neotropic Cormorant holds its neck straight; the neck is about the same length as the tail. It holds its bill upwards when swimming, and eats fish, frogs and aquatic insects.









Brandt's Cormorant *(left)*

Scientific name: *Phalacrocorax penicillatus*
Length: 35 inches, wingspan 48 inches
Habitat: Seawater
Identification: Waterbird. Hook-tipped bill, black plumage, buff patch around throat pouch, pouch cobalt blue in breeding season
Similar species: Can be mistaken for Pelagic Cormorant, but Brandt's is bigger, its head and bill are larger and it is more likely to be seen over open ocean. Also similar to the Double-crested, but is darker and lacks orange throat pouch

A very common bird along the Pacific coast of America south of Alaska, this species prefers being out over the open ocean and rarely comes inland. Brandt's Cormorant is extremely gregarious and is often seen in flocks of several hundred birds, flying in long, straggling lines low over the water. They breed in large colonies, building nests of seaweed and grass on offshore rocks or on flat rocky surfaces on islands and laying 3-6 eggs. Quite stocky and dark, the plumage of the adult bird is glossy black, with a buff-colored patch around the throat pouch. In the breeding season the throat pouch turns cobalt blue, but is quite difficult to see, and the bird develops slender white plumes on face and back. Immature birds are dark brown above and slightly paler beneath. Like other cormorants, Brandt's eats fish and sometimes small crustaceans, which it catches by diving. Several birds often dive together in unison, creating a "net" to catch fish.

Pelagic Cormorant *(above)*

Scientific name: *Phalacrocorax pelagicus*
Length: 26 inches, wingspan 39 inches
Habitat: Seawater, steep cliffs, rocky coasts
Identification: Waterbird. Slim bill with hook at tip, black plumage, white patch on flanks in breeding season
Similar species: Pelagic Cormorant is very similar to Brandt's, but is smaller, prefers coastal waters to the open sea, and the breeding bird has two small crests on crown and nape at close range. In flight, it has a smaller head and a longer tail. The Red-faced Cormorant has a larger area of bright red facial skin and a yellow bill

The smallest cormorant along the Pacific coast of America, this species is found all round the west coast of Alaska and as far south as California and into the Bering Strait. Like Brandt's, it rarely comes inland but also does not venture far out to sea. Less sociable than many cormorants, it is seen alone or in small flocks. It breeds in small colonies, building a nest of seaweed and grass on a ledge of a steep cliff and laying 3-7 eggs. The ledge is often so narrow that the bird has to take off and land facing the cliff face. The adult is slim, with a long, slender neck and a thin, dark bill. Its plumage is glossy black with an iridescent green tint; a dark red patch on the face is very difficult to see. In the breeding season white patches develop on the flanks and fine white plumes on each side of the neck, and the head has small tufts on crown and nape. Immature birds are dark brown, similar to young Red-faced Cormorants. The Pelagic Cormorant dives to catch fish and small crustaceans.

Double-crested Cormorant *(opposite)*

Scientific name: *Phalacrocorax auritus*
Length: 32 inches, wingspan 52 inches
Habitat: Seawater, inland lakes, rivers
Identification: Waterbird. Hook-tipped bill, black plumage, orange throat pouch. In breeding season small tufts on head. When flying holds its neck in distinctive kink
Similar species: The Great Cormorant has very similar plumage, but is larger and the breeding bird has a lemon-yellow throat pouch and white patches on its flanks. Also similar to Brandt's Cormorant, but Brandt's coloring is more uniform and it lacks an orange throat pouch

This is the most widespread cormorant in North America, common in many areas - especially inland. It often nests in colonies near large areas of deep water, either high up in trees, on cliff edges or on the ground on an island. The nest is a mass of sticks or seaweed and the 2-9 eggs are incubated for around 25 days, by both adult birds. The adult is around the size of a goose, with a long tail and a straight, hook-tipped bill that is held pointing upward when it swims. Its plumage is black, with an orange throat pouch, the orange also extends up the face and in front of the eye. During the breeding season it develops small tufts on each side of the head that are black in southeastern birds and whitish in north and west. The juvenile bird is brownish, with a darker back and lighter breast and neck. The Double-crested Cormorant tends to fly in long lines or in V-formation, but holds its neck with a slight kink just behind the head. When foraging, it dives and swims underwater for fish.

Red-faced Cormorant

Scientific name: *Phalacrocorax urile*
Length: 31 inches, wingspan 46 inches
Habitat: Seawater, steep cliffs
Identification: Waterbird. Glossy black, bright red patch on face extending up onto forehead, white patch on flanks in breeding season, white plumes on neck, crests on crown and nape
Similar species: The Red-faced Cormorant is very similar to the Pelagic, but has wings slightly lighter in color than its body, a larger area of bright red facial skin and a yellow bill

This cormorant is only found round the coast of Alaska and is a permanent resident of some Alaskan islands. More sociable than the Pelagic, it is seen in smaller flocks and breeds in small colonies, building nests of seaweed and grass on the ledges of steep coastal cliffs and small islands. It lays 3-4 blueish eggs and both male and female take care of the young; when the birds change over on the nest, the incoming parent goes through an elaborate display. The adult is a stocky bird, with a relatively short neck and a pale-yellow bill. Its plumage is glossy black with lighter brown-black wings, and it has a bright red patch on the face that extends up onto the forehead. Like the Pelagic, in the breeding season the mature Red-faced Cormorant develops white patches on its flanks and fine white plumes on each side of the neck, and the head has small tufts on crown and nape. Immature birds are brownish and look very similar to young Pelagic Cormorants. The Red-faced Cormorant eats fish and small crustaceans, which it catches by diving down from the surface.





Anhinga

Scientific name:	*Anhinga anhinga*
Length:	35 inches, wingspan 45 inches
Habitat:	Swampland
Identification:	Tropical waterbird. Black plumage, white spots and streaks on wings and upper back, long slim neck, swims with only head and neck out of water. Female's neck buff-colored
Similar species:	Can be confused with a cormorant, but is told apart by the white markings on the upper part of its wings, its thin, narrow, pointed bill, long elegant neck and fan-shaped tail

The Anhinga is a tropical bird, so those found in the southern swamps of North America are at the northern edge of their range. They nest in colonies, along with egrets and other birds, building a small mass of twigs and sticks lined with green leaves up to 40 feet above the ground, either in trees or bushes - they sometimes take over an old heron's nest. They lay 1-5 eggs, which are incubated for 25-28 days by both parent birds. The mature adult has a mainly glossy iridescent black plumage, with extensive white spots and streaks on its wings and upper back, a very long, slender neck, a long thin pointed bill and a fan-shaped tail. The female has a buff-colored neck and head. Both sexes of the juvenile bird have less white on the wings and a buff head and neck; they look alike until the third winter, when the male's neck and head plumage turns black. The Anhinga often swims with only its head and neck above the surface of the water, earning itself the nickname of "snakebird". It spears fish, frogs and small crustaceans with its dagger-like bill, before surfacing fully to toss them up in the air and swallow them head first. It can often be seen perched on stumps or branches with its wings spread out to dry. When flying it can soar to great heights, gliding on warm air currents on its long, pointed wings for hours on end.







MAGNIFICENT FRIGATEBIRD

Scientific name:	*Fregata magnificens*
Length:	40 inches, wingspan 90 inches
Habitat:	Offshore
Identification:	Tropical seabird. Long narrow angular wings, deeply-forked tail, long hooked bill. Male is glossy black, orange-red throat pouch sometimes inflated in display. Female is blackish-brown, white chest
Similar species:	No other birds are really similar, the Swallow-tailed Kite is much smaller

A large, tropical seabird, the Magnificent Frigatebird can be seen in the Gulf of Mexico, along the Florida coast and occasionally along the Californian coast. It does sometimes venture inland, or finds itself there after tropical storms, and there is a breeding colony on the Dry Tortugas islands off Florida. When resting, the Magnificent Frigatebird never sits on the water but perches on isolated sea cliffs or on bushes. It nests in bushes or on rocky ground, building a cup of sticks and grass to hold 1-2 eggs. Both parent birds incubate the eggs, for more than 50 days, and the chicks stay in the nest for a further 5 months after hatching. The adult bird has long, narrow, angular wings, a long, deeply-forked tail and a long, hooked bill. The male is a glossy black, with an orange-red throat pouch which is sometimes inflated in display during the breeding season (*above*). The female is a blackish-brown with a white chest. The juvenile has a white head and underparts and takes around 4-6 years to achieve its full adult plumage. The Magnificent Frigatebird eats fish, squid and small crustaceans, sometimes snatched from the surface of the water, but also stolen from other species of seabird after spectacular aerial chases.

Green Heron

Scientific name: *Butorides virescens*
Length: 18 inches, wingspan 26 inches
Habitat: Woodland streams, ponds and marshes
Identification: Small wading bird. Bright orange legs in breeding season, greenish blue-gray plumage, chestnut-brown on neck, white to center of throat. Crown feathers raised in crest if bird is alarmed
Similar species: No other birds have a similar size and coloring, but if the juvenile bird has very brown plumage it can be mistaken for the Least Bittern

A small, chunky and secretive bird, the Green Heron is common across much of southeast America. It has quite short legs and a long, straight dark bill. Unlike many of the other herons, it is a very solitary bird - it not only fishes alone, but breeding pairs nest in a tree by themselves, building a nest of sticks in dense bushes or in a tree, which holds 3-6 eggs. Young herons often wander far from their breeding area, so they may return to a different place to breed themselves the following year. The adult bird has quite dark coloring, with deep chestnut-brown on the back and sides of the neck, greenish blue-gray upperparts, and white to the center of the throat and neck. The green-black feathers of the crown are sometimes raised in a crest, particularly if the bird is alarmed; it also flicks its tail. In the breeding season, the dull yellow legs of the male turn a bright orange. The immature bird is browner and its white throat and underparts are streaked with brown. The Green Heron fishes in fresh water with woodland cover, perching on a convenient branch and crouching over the water.





Little Blue Heron

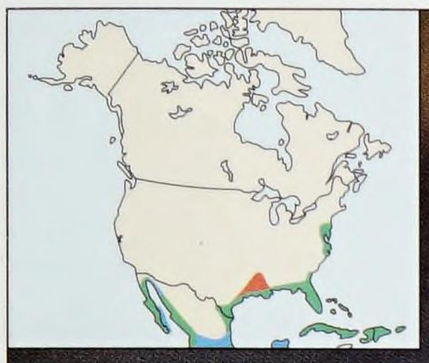
Scientific name:	*Egretta caerulea*
Length:	24 inches, wingspan 40 inches
Habitat:	Freshwater ponds, lakes, marshes, saltwater wetlands
Identification:	Long-legged, long-necked wading bird. Slate-blue plumage, blue bill with black tip
Similar species:	The immature Little Blue Heron is all-white and is very easily confused with the juvenile Snowy Egret, except the Snowy has a black bill and mostly dark legs

The Little Blue Heron is common across the southeast, but is rarely seen in the west. Small and trim, it is a solitary bird when fishing, but nests in colonies. It builds a shallow cup or platform of sticks high above the ground in a bush or a tree, in which it lays 3-7 eggs. Both parents incubate the eggs, which takes 20-25 days, and the young birds leave the nest after around 6 weeks. The adult bird is mostly slate-blue, with a dark-purple tint to head and neck, a blue bill with a black tip and dull green legs and feet. In the breeding season, the head and neck become more red and legs and feet turn black. The juvenile bird is pure white, like the young Snowy Egret, but has dull yellow legs and feet and a thicker gray bill. Gradually it molts, becoming patchy white and blue - which is known as its "calico" phase - until it eventually acquires the adults' darker coloring. The Little Blue Heron feeds in both salt and fresh water, wading very slowly and methodically or standing perfectly still with its neck extended and its bill pointing down, waiting to spear a fish. It will also eat frogs and small reptiles.

Tricolored Heron

Scientific name: *Egretta tricolor*
Length: 26 inches, wingspan 36 inches
Habitat: Salt marshes, mangroves
Identification: Wading bird, long-legged, long-necked. Dark blue with white belly, white stripe up front of the neck, yellowish facial skin and base of bill turn bright blue in breeding season
Similar species: No other birds have a similar coloring

The graceful Tricolored Heron is a slender bird and is common in the coastal salt marshes and mangrove swamps of the southeast; it is also sometimes seen inland and to the west and has bred in North Dakota and Kansas. It was previously called the Louisiana Heron. Like the Little Blue, it is a solitary bird when fishing, but nests in colonies - sometimes with other heron species. It builds a nest of sticks either on the ground or high in a bush or a tree, in which it lays 3-7 eggs. Both parents incubate the eggs, which takes 21-25 days, and the young birds leave the nest after around 5 weeks. The adult bird is mostly dark blue, with a white belly and a white stripe up the front of the neck, and with a yellowish color to the facial skin and at the base of the bill. In the breeding season, the yellowish areas turn bright blue. The immature bird has chestnut-brown on the back of the neck instead of blue, and chestnut-brown markings on the wings. The Tricolored Heron stands motionless with its neck extended and looking intently down into the water, waiting to spear a fish. It also eats frogs, small reptiles, worms and insects.

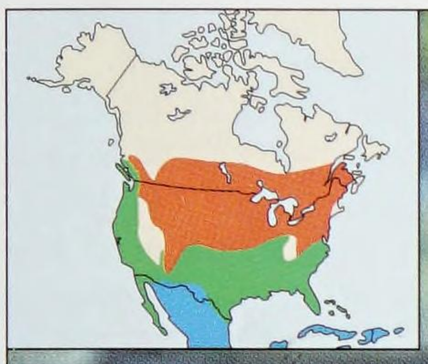




Great Blue Heron

Scientific name: *Ardea herodias*
Length: 46 inches, wingspan 72 inches
Habitat: Wetlands, still water
Identification: Large, long-legged, long-necked wading bird. Blue-gray plumage, white head with black stripe ending in black plumes behind eye. In breeding season, gray plumes on upper chest
Similar species: Sandhill Crane is similar size and coloring, but has a much shorter neck and very different body shape. In Florida, there is an all-white version of the Great Blue Heron that looks very similar to the Great Egret, but is a much bigger bird

The most widespread and familiar heron across much of the country, the Great Blue is also the largest heron in North America. It is a solitary bird and single birds are often seen flying slowly overhead - although they tend to nest in colonies that can contain hundreds of birds. The nest is an untidy-looking platform of sticks, either in trees or bushes, or on cliffs, that is built up to 100 feet above the ground. The 3-7 eggs are incubated for around 28 days, by both adult birds. The chicks leave the nest about 8 weeks after they hatch. The mature bird is huge, with a very long neck and a heavy yellow bill. It has mainly blue-gray plumage, white underparts with black streaks, and a white head with a black stripe that goes into black plumes behind the eye. In the breeding season, gray plumes develop on the upper chest. The juvenile is more gray-brown and has no plumes. In Florida, an all-white version was previously thought to be a separate species and known as the Great White Heron, and there is also one with gray plumage and a white head that is sometimes known as "Wurdemann's Heron". The Great Blue Heron can fly 10-15 miles to where fish are plentiful, and then stand patiently in the water or on the bank waiting to spear a catch. They also sometimes eat frogs, snakes and small mammals.





American Bittern

Scientific name:	*Botaurus lentiginosus*
Length:	28 inches, wingspan 42 inches
Habitat:	Marshland and grassy shores
Identification:	Short-legged wading bird. Brown plumage striped in darker brown, black streaks on neck, pointed wings tipped with black
Similar species:	Juvenile looks similar to juvenile night-herons, but is larger, has longer bill, and in flight has black wingtips, more pointed wings and a faster wingbeat

A master of camouflage, the shy American Bittern is usually very hard to spot, although the male may be seen performing his courtship display out in the open during March and April. Part of the heron family, it is widespread across much of America but lives deep in inaccessible marshy areas and bogs. The breeding pair find an isolated spot and select their territory, which is then defended by the male while the female builds a platform of reeds and grass in heavy cover near to the water's edge. The 2-3 eggs are incubated by the female only, which takes about 29 days; the young birds leave the nest after around 6-7 weeks. The plumage of the adult bird is a rich brown, striped in subtly darker brown and with black streaks on the neck, and the rather pointed wings are tipped with black. The juvenile bird has no black neck streaks. When disturbed, the American Bittern freezes in position with its bill pointed upwards, blending into the vertical stalks of the marsh grass, or suddenly flies up with rapid wingbeats. It eats fish, frogs, small eels, water snails and insects.

Least Bittern

Scientific name:	*Ixobrychus exilis*
Length:	13 inches, wingspan 17 inches
Habitat:	Freshwater marshland with dense cover
Identification:	Small, short-legged heron. Brown plumage, large buff-colored patches on wings visible both in flight and when perching; dark cap, black back with pale stripes
Similar species:	The juvenile Green Heron can look similar if its plumage is very brown, but lacks the large buff patches on the wing that are noticeable both in flight and when the Least Bittern is perched

The tiny Least Bittern is the smallest American heron. It is widespread across much of southeast America but is very secretive and hides away in dense cover in marshy areas. It nests in isolated pairs or in loose colonies, building a platform of dried plants just above the water, or sometimes taking over the disused nest of another bird. The 4-5 eggs are incubated by both parents, which takes about 25 days; the young birds leave the nest around 25 days after hatching. The plumage of the adult bird is mainly brown, with large pale buff-colored patches on the wings that can be seen both in flight and when the bird is perching; the male has a black cap and a black back with two pale stripes, the female a chestnut brown cap and back, also with lighter stripes. The juvenile bird is like the female, but has deeper brown streaks on its back and breast. Like the American Bittern, when alarmed the Least will freeze in position with its bill pointed upwards, mimicking the vertical lines of marsh grass. Rather than flying, it will clamber through grass and reeds at the top of their stout stalks. It lives on fish, frogs and tadpoles.





Black-crowned Night-Heron *(above)*

Scientific name:	*Nycticorax nycticorax*
Length:	25 inches, wingspan 44 inches
Habitat:	Wet woodlands, marshland
Identification:	Nocturnal, short-legged heron. White body, black cap and back, gray wings, long white plumes at nape
Similar species:	Adult unmistakable, juvenile distinguished from juvenile Yellow-crowned Night-Heron by darker brown back with bolder white spots and thicker neck; in flight, the feet barely extend past the tip of the tail. Young bird is also like the juvenile American Bittern, but the Bittern is larger, has longer bill, and in flight has black wingtips, more pointed wings and a faster wingbeat

A stocky heron with a short, thick neck, the Black-crowned Night-Heron is a mainly nocturnal bird that is found across much of America. It roosts in groups during the day, perching in a hunched-up posture in trees or under shady cover in marshes. At night, it comes out to hunt alone, looking for fish, frogs and sometimes crustaceans. It breeds in colonies, building a ramshackle construction of sticks, reeds and twigs up to 160 feet above the ground in trees, in which it lays 2-6 eggs. These are incubated by both parent birds, which takes 24-26 days; the young birds leave the nest after around 6-7 weeks. The adult bird has a white body, gray wings and tail and a green-black back and crown, with three long white plumes at the nape; it also has quite large red eyes. The juvenile bird is two-toned brown above with bold white spots, pale buff with darker streaks below and has pale yellow-orange eyes and a yellowish bill. The young bird's plumage blends in very well with the background, making it almost invisible.

Yellow-crowned Night-Heron

Scientific name:	*Nyctanassa violacea*
Length:	24 inches, wingspan 42 inches
Habitat:	Wet woodlands, swamps
Identification:	Mainly nocturnal, short-legged heron. Gray plumage, striking black and white face, three long white plumes at nape, feet extend past tail in flight
Similar species:	Adult unmistakable, juvenile distinguished from juvenile Black-crowned Night-Heron by less conspicuous white spots on back, longer legs and thicker black bill. In flight, the feet extend further past the tip of the tail

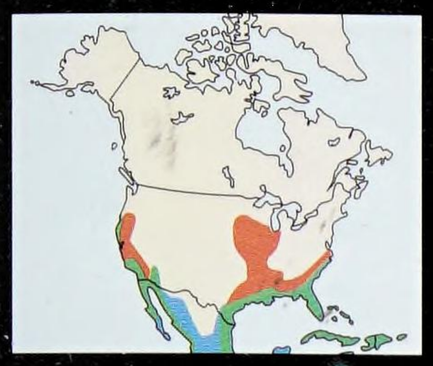
Like the Black-crowned, the Yellow-crowned Night-Heron is mainly a nocturnal bird, but it does also hunt during the day. It is seen mainly in southeast America, very rarely venturing into the western states. It is not particularly gregarious, hunting alone and nesting in isolated pairs or in small colonies. It builds a very sturdy cup of sticks, reeds and twigs 15-50 feet above the ground in a tree, in which it lays 2-8 eggs. These are incubated by both parents, which takes 21-25 days; the young birds leave the nest after around 25 days. The adult bird has gray plumage, with a striking black and white face, quite large red eyes, and three long white plumes at the nape; its pale yellow crown is not very noticeable. The juvenile bird is two-toned brown with small white spots on the back and distinct streaks on the breast, a thick all-black bill and has pale yellow-orange eyes. The young bird's plumage blends well with the background, making it difficult to see, and this species will often freeze rather than fly away when surprised. In coastal areas, the Yellow-crowned Night-Heron eats crabs, but it will also take fish and frogs. When foraging, it walks very slowly, but strikes with speed when it spots something edible.

Great Egret

Scientific name: *Ardea alba*
Length: 39 inches, wingspan 51 inches
Habitat: Lakes, marshes, wetlands
Identification: Large, long-legged, long-necked wading bird. White plumage, long thin yellow bill, black legs
Similar species: Its large size distinguishes the Great Egret from most other white herons. Its black legs set it apart from the all-white version of the Great Blue Heron

The Great Egret is the largest and the most widespread egret in America. Most egrets are white, and their population was endangered in the late 19th century by hunters killing them for their feathers, which were highly prized in the millinery industry. Now the birds are in danger from the draining of their wet habitats. The Great Egret is a sociable bird and nests in large colonies, either in reeds or more usually in trees. It builds a large, sturdy platform of sticks - old nests are often repaired and reused - and lays 3-5 eggs. These are incubated for 23-36 days by both adult birds, with the chicks staying in the nest for 6-7 weeks after hatching. The plumage of both adult birds is pure white, and they have a long, thin, yellow bill and black legs and feet. Breeding birds have long lacy white plumes extending from their back, reaching further than the end of the tail. Immature birds are also white, but a rather duller color and have no plumes. The Great Egret wades elegantly through shallow water, stalking its prey slowly and methodically; it eats fish, frogs, water snakes and insects.







Snowy Egret

Scientific name:	*Egretta thula*
Length:	24 inches, wingspan 41 inches
Habitat:	Wetlands, freshwater lakes
Identification:	Medium-sized , long-legged, wading bird. White plumage, small plumes on head, long thin black bill, long black legs, yellow feet
Similar species:	Similar to Cattle Egret and immature Little Blue Heron, but has black bill. Cattle Egret also has thicker neck, shorter bill and legs, young Little Blue Heron has blue-gray tips to its wings

A medium-sized egret, the Snowy Egret is common in the wetlands of southern America. Like the Great Egret, it is a sociable bird and nests in colonies. It builds a large, sturdy platform of sticks - either in reeds or more usually 5-12 feet up in trees - and lays 2-6 eggs. These are incubated for 22-26 days by both adult birds, with the chicks staying in the nest for around 4 weeks after hatching. When changing over on the nest, the arriving bird greets its partner with several deep bows. The plumage of both adult birds is snow white, with small plumes on the head, a long, thin, black bill, black legs and yellow feet. Breeding birds have particularly long lacy white plumes extending from their back, which curve upwards and were highly prized by feather hunters in the late 19th century. Immature birds are also white, but have a yellowish stripe down the back of the legs and no plumes. The Snowy Egret hunts in shallow muddy water, probing and stirring up the bottom with its bright yellow feet and startling fish and frogs, which are promptly speared with its sharp bill.

Cattle Egret

Scientific name:	*Bubulcus ibis*
Length:	20 inches, wingspan 36 inches
Habitat:	Fields among livestock, marshes, swamps
Identification:	Compact and stocky heron. White plumage, pale orange plumes on crown, back and chest, short yellow bill
Similar species:	Similar to Snowy Egret, but has shorter yellow bill, or red-orange in breeding season, shorter legs and thicker neck. When flying, the Cattle Egret beats its wings deeper and faster than the Snowy

A rather stocky bird, the Cattle Egret originally came from the Old World but spread to Florida via South America and continues to spread northwards across America. It is a very sociable bird and nests in huge colonies, which often contain many hundreds of birds. Its nest is a cup of sticks and twigs, either at the water's edge or 5-12 feet up in a tree, in which it lays 2-6 eggs. These are incubated for 22-26 days by both adult birds, with the chicks staying on in the nest for around 4 weeks after they have hatched. The plumage of both adult birds is white, with pale orange plumes on crown, back and chest. The relatively short bill is yellow, but turns red-orange in the breeding season; the yellowish legs also turn reddish. Immature birds are like the adult, but very young birds have a black bill that only begins to turn yellow during the first year. The Cattle Egret is often seen in fields full of livestock, feeding on the insects and earthworms stirred up by the animals' hooves - unlike other species of heron, it never wades in water when foraging.





White Ibis

Scientific name:	*Eudocimus albus*
Length:	25 inches, wingspan 38 inches
Habitat:	Coastal salt marshes, swamps, mangroves
Identification:	Medium-sized, long-necked, long-legged wading bird. Long, decurved bill, white plumage, black tips to wings. Holds neck extended in flight
Similar species:	The immature White Ibis looks similar to both the Glossy Ibis and White-faced Ibis, but can be distinguished by its white belly

White Ibis are quite common all year round in wetlands around the southern coasts of the United States, and have been recorded breeding as far north as Virginia. They are gregarious birds and live in small colonies, building nests of sticks and twigs in trees or reed beds. The female lays 2-5 eggs, which are incubated for 21-23 days. The chicks take a further 28-35 days to fledge. Both the adult male and female bird have white body plumage, with black tips to the outer primary wing feathers. The bill and facial skin are a reddish-pink, and the legs are red. The immature bird has a brown head, neck, back and wings, with a white belly. Its bill and facial skin are both orange and the legs are a dull brown. The White Ibis is closely related to the Scarlet Ibis, a South American species which has either escaped or been introduced to Florida. The two species have interbred in this area, leading to offspring in various shades of pink and scarlet. When feeding, adult birds wade through shallow water catching fish and aquatic invertebrates with their long, curved bills. They have also been known to eat small reptiles and amphibians.



White-faced Ibis

Scientific name:	*Plegadis chihi*
Length:	23 inches, wingspan 36 inches
Habitat:	Freshwater marshes
Identification:	Medium-sized, long-necked, long-legged wading bird. Long, dark gray decurved bill, red eyes. Holds neck extended in flight
Similar species:	Mature White-faced Ibis can be distinguished from Glossy Ibis by their red eyes, and in breeding plumage also by their red legs and white feathered border to red facial skin

White-faced Ibis spend spring and summer in their breeding grounds in the freshwater marshes across central North America. They are rare in the mid-west, but are sometimes found on the east coast as far north as New England. Some birds spend all year round in southern Mexico. They may frequent brackish areas and will also feed in flooded fields. The female lays 2-7 eggs, which are incubated for 21-22 days. The chicks take around 28 days to fledge. At most times of the year, both male and female adult birds have red eyes, gray facial skin, gray-green legs and gray-brown feathers with the head and neck streaked with white. In the breeding season, the plumage of both becomes an iridescent purple-red, with wings and tail an iridescent green. The legs turn red and also the facial skin, which becomes entirely ringed with an even band of white feathers. Adult birds feed almost exclusively on aquatic invertebrates, which they catch with their long, curved bills while wading through shallow water. The birds that breed in central North America move south for the winter, to areas around the Gulf of Mexico.



Glossy Ibis

Scientific name:	*Plegadis falcinellus*
Length:	23 inches, wingspan 36 inches
Habitat:	Freshwater and saltwater marshes
Identification:	Medium-sized, long-necked, long-legged wading bird. Long, dark gray decurved bill, brown eyes. Holds neck extended in flight
Similar species:	Mature White-faced Ibis can be distinguished from Glossy Ibis by their red eyes, and in breeding plumage also by their red legs and white feathered border to red facial skin

The Glossy Ibis is to be found in the freshwater and saltwater marshes of Florida and the Atlantic coast, and its range is expanding north along the east coast. These birds rarely go inland, but have been seen as far west as Colorado. They roost in trees, and nest either on the ground or up to 10 feet above in a tree, building a platform of sticks. The female lays 2-7 eggs, which are incubated for 21-22 days by both parent birds. The chicks take around 28 days to fledge. At most times of the year, both male and female adult birds have brown eyes, gray facial skin bordered with a bluish line, gray-green legs with red joints, chestnut body and greeny-brown wing feathers. In the breeding season, the plumage of both becomes an iridescent purple-red, with wings and tail an iridescent green. The immature bird is very similar to the young White-faced Ibis, only being distinguished by having a blue line edging the face rather than white. The Glossy Ibis congregates in flocks to feed, eating crayfish, insects and frogs which they catch with their long, curved bills while wading through shallow water.



Wood Stork

Scientific name:	*Mycteria americana*
Length:	40 inches, wingspan 61 inches
Habitat:	Wet meadows, swamps, ponds, coastal shallows
Identification:	Large, long-necked, long-legged wading bird. Long, thick, down-curved bill, naked gray head, white plumage, black on tail and wing
Similar species:	In flight can resemble the American White Pelican, but has more black on its white wings and flies with its head straight out, rather than tucked back

The Wood Stork is the only native American stork; it is seen in Florida throughout most of the year, although during the summer it spreads much further through the southwest. It nests in large colonies, building a flimsy-looking platform of sticks and twigs in trees, sometimes as much as 80 feet above the ground. The 3-4 eggs are incubated by both parent birds for 28-32 days, and the young chicks leave the nest around 50-55 days later. The adult bird is large, with long legs, a bald, leathery, black-gray head and neck and a long, thick, down-curved bill. Its body plumage is mainly white, with black tail feathers and black along the trailing edge of the wing. The juvenile bird is similar, but its head has grayish-brown feathers and its bill is yellow. The Wood Stork walks slowly and sedately through shallow water, with its head down, feeling with its bill for fish, frogs, reptiles and insects. Flocks of storks often soar high into the sky, flying with slow, deliberate wingbeats and with head and legs extended. Their population has been endangered by the draining of their habitat in recent years.

Roseate Spoonbill

Scientific name:	*Ajaia ajaja*
Length:	32 inches, wingspan 50 inches
Habitat:	Marshes, lagoons, mangroves, mudflats
Identification:	Large, long-necked, long-legged wading bird. Long, spatulate bill, pink plumage,. Holds neck extended in flight
Similar species:	Flamingos are similar size and coloring, but no other bird has the distinctive spoonbill

These beautiful birds are very gregarious and are often seen feeding or flying in flocks around the Gulf of Mexico and in the southwest. They nest in small colonies, often with varieties of heron. Their courtship ritual is elaborate, with flying displays and clapping of bills. The Roseate Spoonbill mates for life and the pair construct a nest of twigs and sticks, usually in bushes, trees or reeds, but sometimes on the ground. They lay 2-3 eggs in one clutch, which they incubate for 22-23 days. The chicks take a further 35-42 days to fledge. The adult male and female look very similar, with a white neck with a pink back and wings highlighted in red. The head has no feathers and is greenish in color, while the distinctive spatulate bill is pale gray with darker gray-black mottling. The eyes are red, the legs are red with dark feet. The immature bird has yellow eyes and a yellowish bill, with white head feathers, and its body is white or a very pale pink. When feeding, the adults swing their distinctive spoon-shaped bills back and forth through shallow water to catch small fish, crustaceans and aquatic invertebrates. They also sometimes eat plant material. Roseate Spoonbills were once hunted for their plumes, which were used in the millinery trade, but now - despite the destruction of their habitat in some areas - their numbers in America have increased.





Mute Swan

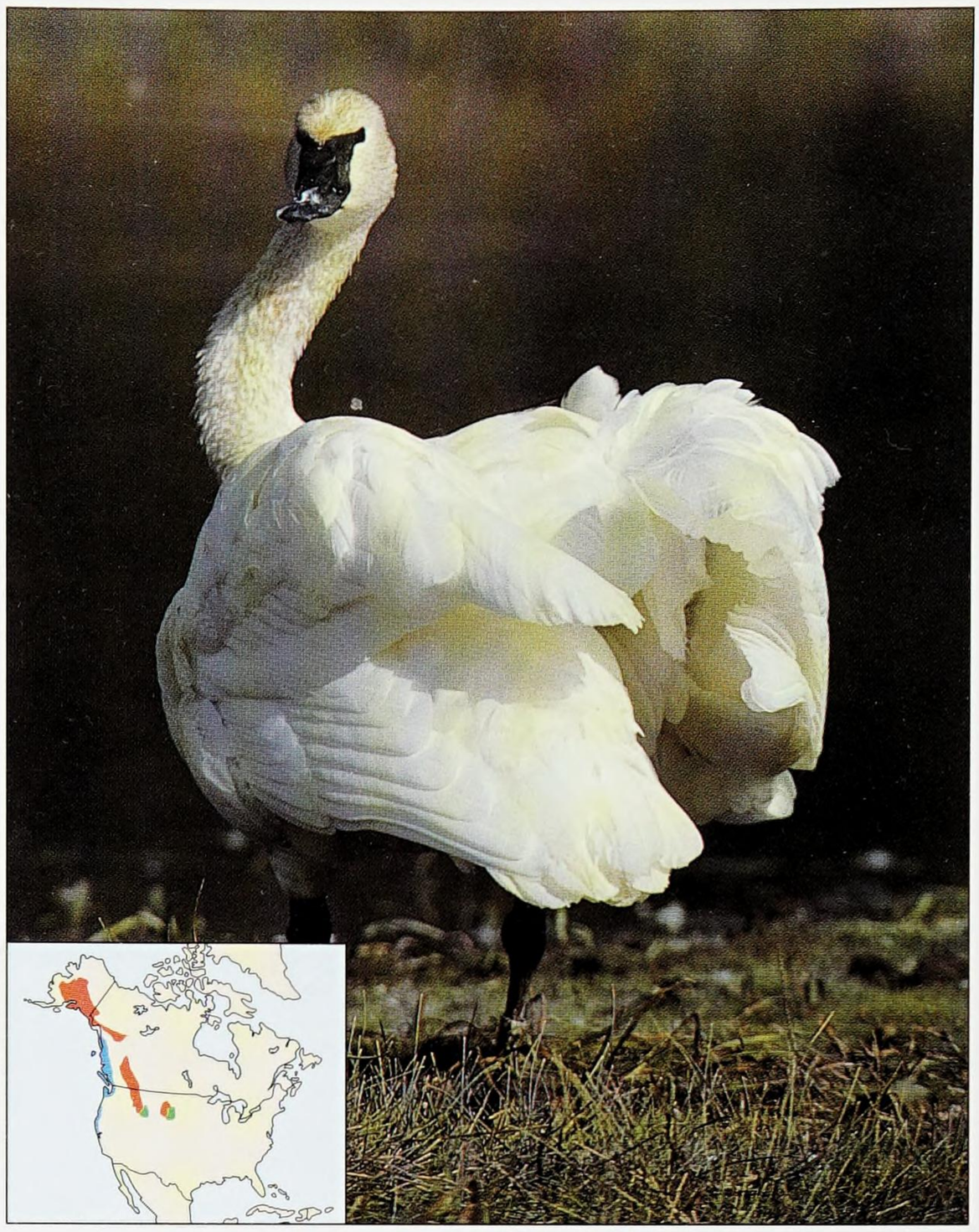
Scientific name:	*Cygnus olor*
Length:	60 inches
Habitat:	Ponds, lakes, parks
Identification:	Very large, long-necked waterfowl. White plumage, orange bill with black knob at base. Tends to hold neck in S-curve
Similar species:	The juvenile Mute Swan looks very similar to the juvenile Trumpeter, but tends to hold its neck in more of a curve

The Mute Swan is an Old World species that was introduced into North America and is found mainly on the east coast and around the Great Lakes - it likes to be near people. Populations are increasing, displacing native birds, so in some areas they are being removed. It is often silent, although it sometimes hisses or grunts, but when flying its wingbeats produce a loud rhythmic hum. Like other swans it breeds near water, building a large mass of plant material in which it lays 4-6 eggs. Incubation is done by the female bird, and takes around 34-38 days. The young birds leave the nest very soon after hatching, but stay with the parent birds for a further 4 months. The Mute Swan has white plumage, a long pointed tail and a very long slender neck, which it tends to hold in an S-curve. Its bill is orange with a prominent black knob at the base and it quite often swims with its wings held up over its back in an arch. The immature bird has a pinkish-gray bill and its plumage is a dull brownish-white, which it retains through until midwinter. The Mute eats aquatic plants, which it dislodges with its powerful bill - a blow from it can break a man's arm.

Trumpeter Swan

Scientific name: *Cygnus buccinator*
Length: 60 inches
Habitat: Wooded ponds, rivers
Identification: Very large, long-necked waterfowl. White plumage, black bill. Tends to hold neck straight upward
Similar species: Very similar to Tundra Swan, but is bigger and has longer bill with no yellow. The juvenile Trumpeter looks very similar to the juvenile Mute Swan, but tends to hold its neck straight rather than in a curve

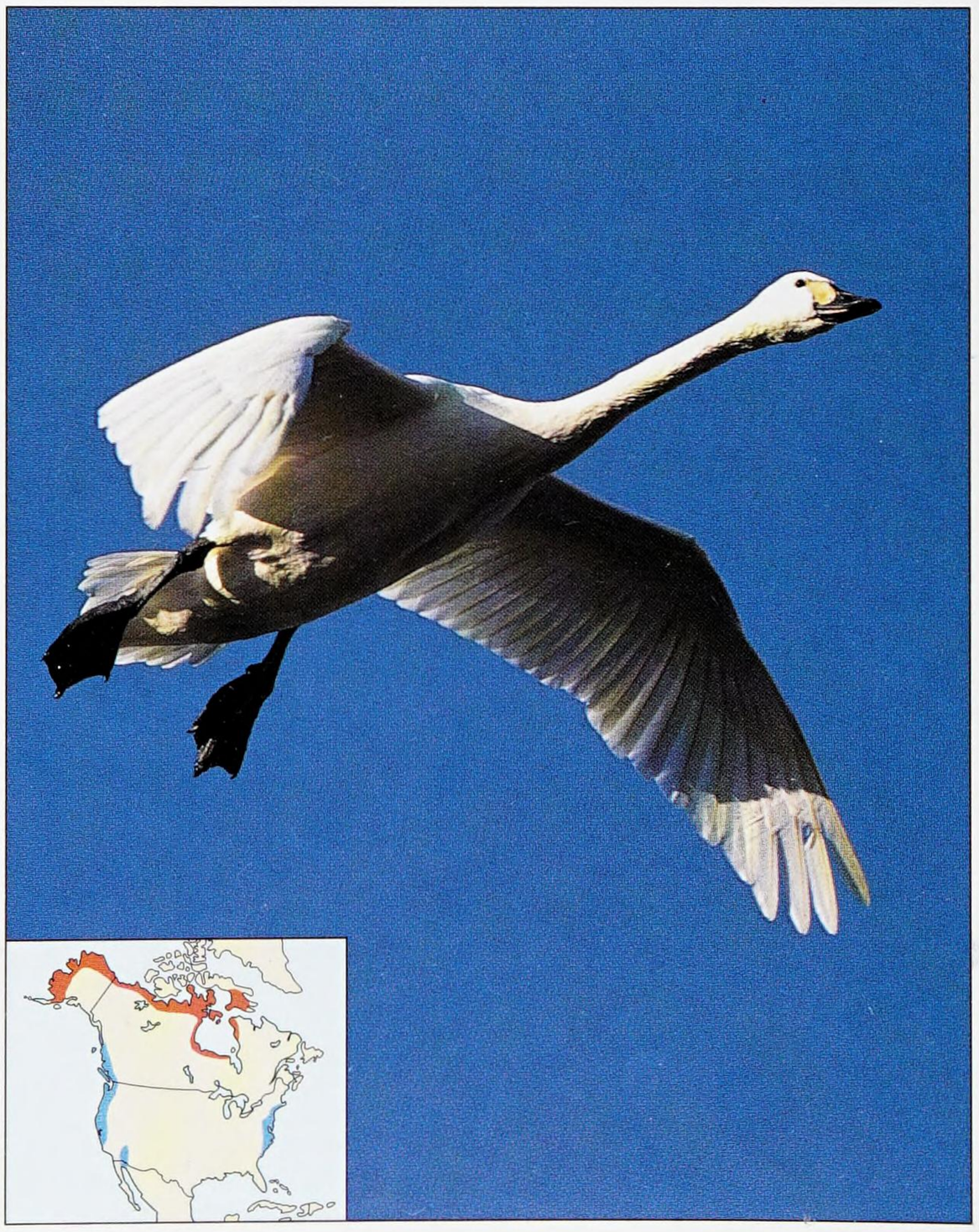
The other major North American race of swan, the Trumpeter, is a huge bird that is found in the northwest but is being introduced further east. At the beginning of the twentieth century the species had almost died out, after hunters slaughtered it for its down and skin, and swans' eggs had become sought-after by gourmets. After protection was introduced, the population rose and is still slowly increasing. The Trumpeter Swan breeds near water, building a large mound of plant material in which it lays 2-13 eggs. Incubation is done by the female bird, and takes around 33 days. The young birds leave the nest very soon after hatching, but stay with the parent birds until the following spring. The Trumpeter Swan has white plumage and a very long slender neck, which it tends to hold straight upwards. Its straight bill is black and it has black facial skin which comes down in a deep V on the forehead. The immature bird has a pinkish bill and its plumage is a dull gray-brown, which it retains through the first spring. This species eats aquatic plants and insects; they use their long necks to reach food on the bottom.

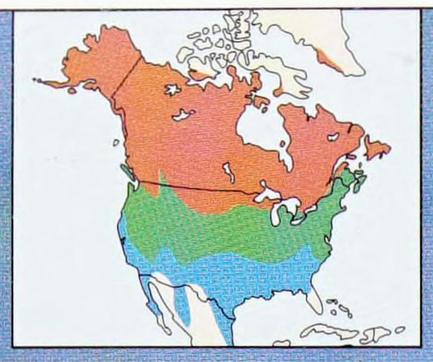


Tundra Swan

Scientific name: *Cygnus columbianus*
Length: 52 inches
Habitat: Shallow ponds, lakes, marshes, rivers
Identification: Large, long-necked waterfowl. White plumage, black bill, yellow spot in front of eye. Tends to hold neck straight upward
Similar species: Similar to other swans, but is smaller than Trumpeter Swan and has shorter bill; most Tundras have a yellow spot in front of the eye. Adult can be distinguished from the adult Mute Swan by having a black bill rather than orange

A North American race that was formerly known as the Whistling Swan, the Tundra Swan is found in summer on Arctic tundra but comes further south in the winter. It tends to return to old haunts and is usually seen in flocks; its call is quite musical. It breeds near tundra ponds, building a large mound of leaves and grass in which it lays 2-7 eggs. Incubation is done by the female bird, and takes around 32 days. The young birds leave the nest very soon after hatching, but stay with the parent birds until the following spring. The Tundra Swan is the smallest American swan; it has white plumage and a relatively long slender neck, but it tends to hold its neck straight upward. Its slightly concave bill is black; it has black facial skin with a rounded border across the forehead and most birds have a small yellow spot in front of the eye. The immature bird has a pinkish bill and its plumage is a dull gray-brown, but it turns white much sooner than the juveniles of other swan species. Most birds feed on both land and water, eating aquatic plants and small mollusks.





Canada Goose

Scientific name:	*Branta canadensis*
Length:	25-45 inches
Habitat:	Ponds, marshes, grassland, open farmland
Identification:	Medium waterfowl. Black head and neck, white "chin strap", dark back, white undertail coverts. In flight, shows dark wings and white U-shaped rump band
Similar species:	Smaller birds could be mistaken for Brant, but in Canada Goose the black of the neck stops above the chest and it has a broad white "chin strap"

The most common and distinctive goose in America, which can be found across the entire country at different times of the year. Its nest is a large hollow lined with plant matter and soft down, in relatively open areas near water. It lays 2-12 white eggs, which are incubated by the female only for around 25-30 days. The male defends his mate and offspring very fiercely - warning intruders away at first, but not hesitating to attack even much larger suspected enemies. The young birds are downy and leave the nest soon after hatching, but stay with the parents until the following spring. The plumage of the mature adult can vary quite considerably, but it generally has a black head and neck, with a distinctive white "chin strap" from ear to ear, dark back, white undertail coverts. In flight, it shows dark wings and a white U-shaped rump band. Eastern birds are generally paler, western birds darker, but the difference can be hard to see. Northern birds tend to be smaller than those in the south. The Canada Goose flies in V-formation when migrating, stopping often to feed. It eats aquatic plants, grain, grass and small aquatic animals. This species is currently spreading into city parks and golf courses and populations are increasing.

Brant

Scientific name: *Branta bernicla*
Length: 25 inches
Habitat: Shallow bays, marshy coasts
Identification: Medium waterfowl. Black head, neck and chest, whitish patch on either side of neck, dark back, white undertail coverts almost concealing black tail
Similar species: Could be mistaken for Canada Goose, but generally smaller, darker and stockier, black of neck extends further onto chest and lacks broad white "chin strap"

Primarily a sea goose, which breeds on high Arctic tundra and spends the winter mainly along the west coast, a few are found on the east coast but it is very rare inland. Its nest is a hollow lined with plant stems, down and feathers in which it lays 1-7 eggs. Incubation is done by the female bird, and takes around 22-26 days. The young birds leave the nest very soon after hatching, but stay with the parent birds until the following spring. The mature adult has a black head, neck and chest, with a whitish patch on either side of the neck, dark back and white undertail coverts almost concealing the black tail. Eastern birds have a white belly, western birds have a dark belly, but the difference can be hard to see. Juvenile birds have pale bands across the back and often lack the white neck patch entirely. The Brant flies in low, ragged formations of 20-50 birds, its quite long and pointed wings beating rapidly. It eats aquatic plants, insects and crustaceans and can be seen in winter on marshy coasts or grazing on open fields near the seaside.



Ross's Goose

Scientific name: *Chen rossii*
Length: 23 inches
Habitat: Marshes, open fields
Identification: Medium waterfowl, short-necked. White with black wingtips, short pinky-red bill
Similar species: Snow Goose is larger, has longer neck and flatter head, bill has black "grin patch", in flight wingbeats are slower. The darker form is very distinct from the darker form of the Snow Goose, as it has a white belly

A very common bird in some parts of the south in winter, sharing much the same range and migration patterns as the Snow Goose and often seen with it - usually in large flocks. It nests in colonies on islands in Arctic tundra, making a shallow depression lined with grass, plant stems and down in which it lays 2-6 eggs. Incubation is done by the female bird, and takes around 21-24 days. The young birds leave the nest very soon after hatching, but stay with the parent birds until the following spring. The mature adult has a round head and is mostly white; in flight it has a gray-blue tint to the wing coverts and primary feathers are black. Its pinky-red bill is short and triangular, and it has quite a short neck. A very rare color variation has a mostly white head, a brown back, variable amounts of white underneath and more black on the wings. The juvenile bird is white but has some grayish tinting to its head, back and flanks, the juvenile of the darker form is overall a dark gray-brown, with white face and belly. Ross's Goose eats aquatic plants, young shoots, grain and insects and can often be seen in grasslands and grainfields.



Greater White-fronted Goose

Scientific name: *Anser albifrons*
Length: 28 inches
Habitat: Freshwater wetlands, farmland
Identification: Large waterfowl. Grayish-brown, black bars underneath, pinky-orange bill with whitish tip and broad white stripe at base, orange feet and legs
Similar species: Juvenile is almost identical to Bean Goose, but Bean has black bill, sometimes with a yellow-orange band and is rarely seen in America. Juvenile of the darker form of the Snow Goose is very similar overall, but has darker legs and lacks white face band

A very common bird in some parts of the west and mid-west, the Greater White-fronted Goose is named for the distinctive white band at the base of its bill. Like other geese it nests in colonies near water, making a shallow depression lined with down in which it lays 4-7 eggs. Incubation is done by the female bird, and takes around 28 days. The young birds leave the nest very soon after hatching, but stay with the parent birds until the following spring. The mature adult is mostly grayish-brown, with variable black bars underneath; in flight it has a gray-blue tint to the wing feathers and a U-shaped white band on the rump. Its pinky-orange bill has a whitish tip and a broad white stripe at the base, and it has orange feet and legs. The adult bird varies greatly in size and in coloring; tundra breeders are smaller and paler, with heavier barring; taiga breeders are the largest, darker with less barring; Greenland breeders are medium size, darkest in coloring and have an orange bill. The juvenile is very similar overall, but does not acquire the face band until its first winter and black barring until second fall. The Greater White-fronted Goose eats aquatic plants, grain and insects and can often be seen grazing in fields. When migrating, it is sometimes seen in flocks of many thousands of birds.





Snow Goose

Scientific name:	*Chen caerulescens*
Length:	28 inches
Habitat:	Grassland, grainfields, coastal wetlands
Identification:	Large waterfowl. White with black wingtips, pinky-orange bill with black "grin patch"
Similar species:	Ross's Goose is smaller, has shorter neck and rounder head, bill lacks black "grin patch", in flight wingbeats are faster. Juvenile of the darker form is very similar overall to Greater White-fronted Goose, but has darker legs and lacks white face band

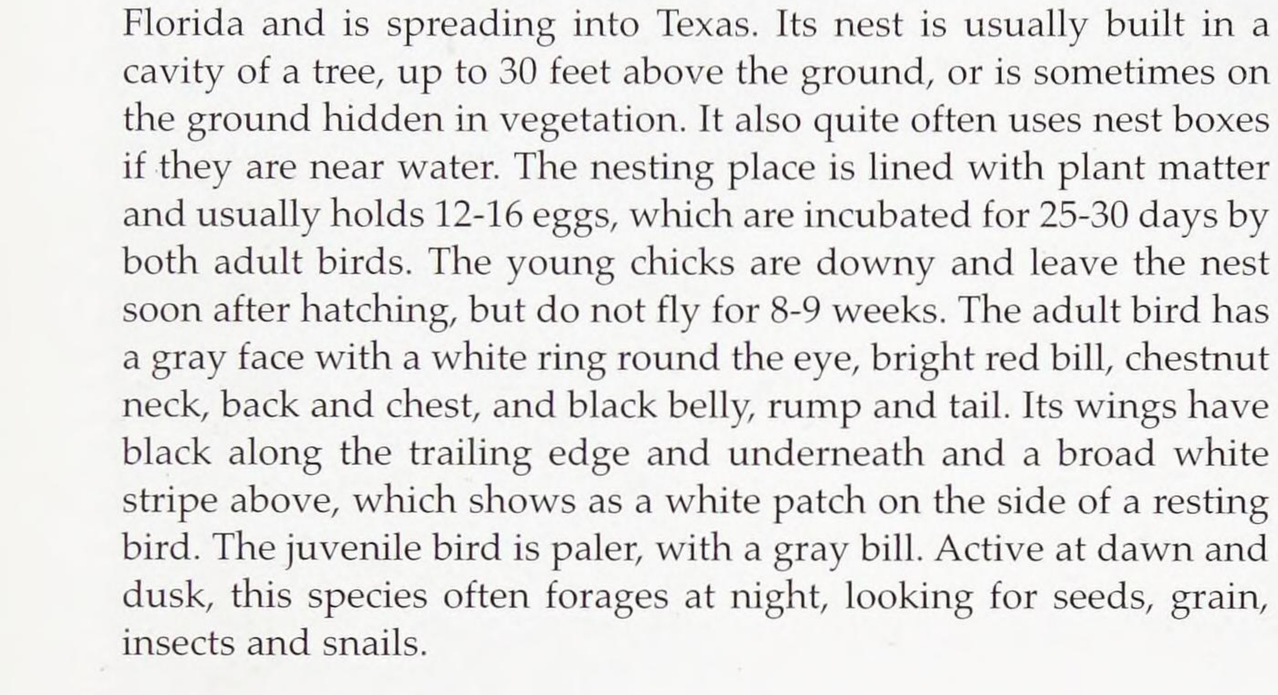
A very common bird in some parts of the south in winter, and seen in large flocks of hundreds of birds over specific routes when migrating from its breeding grounds on Arctic tundra. It nests in colonies near water, making a shallow depression lined with grass, plant stems and down in which it lays 3-8 eggs. Incubation is done by the female bird, and takes around 22-25 days. The young birds leave the nest very soon after hatching, but stay with the parent birds until the following spring. The mature adult has a flattish head and is mostly white; in flight it has a gray-blue tint to the wing coverts and primary feathers are black. Its large bill is pinky-orange with a black "grin patch", and it has quite a long neck. In summer, rusty markings appear on the face. Another color variation, which was formerly known as the Blue Goose, has a mostly white head, a brown back, variable amounts of white underneath and more black on the wings. The juvenile bird is grayish, with a dark bill, the juvenile of the darker form is overall a slaty gray-brown, very similar overall to the Greater White-fronted Goose but has darker legs and lacks white face band. The Snow Goose eats aquatic plants, grain and insects and can often be seen in winter grazing in fields.

Black-bellied Whistling-Duck

Scientific name:	*Dendrocygna autumnalis*
Length:	21 inches
Habitat:	Marshes, tree-lined shallow ponds, flooded woods
Identification:	Medium waterfowl, long-necked. Gray face with white ring round eye, red bill, chestnut neck, back and chest, black belly, rump and tail
Similar species:	Adult is unmistakable, because of its goose-like shape and distinct coloring

The Black-bellied Whistling-Duck is increasingly common; it is mainly found around the Mexican border, but is also established in Florida and is spreading into Texas. Its nest is usually built in a cavity of a tree, up to 30 feet above the ground, or is sometimes on the ground hidden in vegetation. It also quite often uses nest boxes if they are near water. The nesting place is lined with plant matter and usually holds 12-16 eggs, which are incubated for 25-30 days by both adult birds. The young chicks are downy and leave the nest soon after hatching, but do not fly for 8-9 weeks. The adult bird has a gray face with a white ring round the eye, bright red bill, chestnut neck, back and chest, and black belly, rump and tail. Its wings have black along the trailing edge and underneath and a broad white stripe above, which shows as a white patch on the side of a resting bird. The juvenile bird is paler, with a gray bill. Active at dawn and dusk, this species often forages at night, looking for seeds, grain, insects and snails.

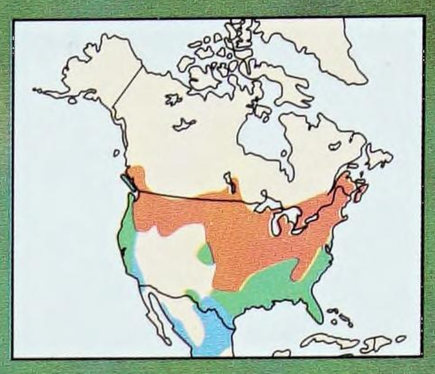




Green-winged Teal

Scientific name:	*Anas crecca*
Length:	14½ inches
Habitat:	Marshland
Identification:	Dabbling waterfowl. Male has chestnut head, green ear patch outlined in white, gray sides with white vertical line in front of wing, gray-brown back
Similar species:	Almost identical to the "Eurasian" or "Common" Green-winged Teal, which is a rare visitor to the northwest and northeast - the male of this species only differs in having a white horizontal stripe on the body and having no vertical white bar on side, the female cannot be safely distinguished from other female teals, although it has a smaller bill than some others

The smallest of the American dabbling ducks, the Green-winged Teal is found in marshes across North America, breeding in the north and spending winter in the south. Its nest is a hollow of grass lined with down, hidden in vegetation near water. It holds 10 or more eggs, which are incubated by the female bird for around 24 days. The downy young chicks leave the nest soon after hatching and fly at about 6 weeks. The adult male (*left*) has a chestnut head and cheeks, with a dark green ear patch outlined in white, a buff breast with darker speckles, gray sides with a white vertical line in front of the wing, and a gray-brown back. The female is light brown speckled with darker brown with mainly white undertail coverts. In flight, the wings of both adults have a green patch. On its winter grounds and at staging areas the Green-winged Teal gathers in flocks of hundreds of birds, which often fly in tight formation, describing complicated maneuvers in the air. On the water the flock breaks up into smaller groups to feed on insects and aquatic plants.



Wood Duck *(above)*

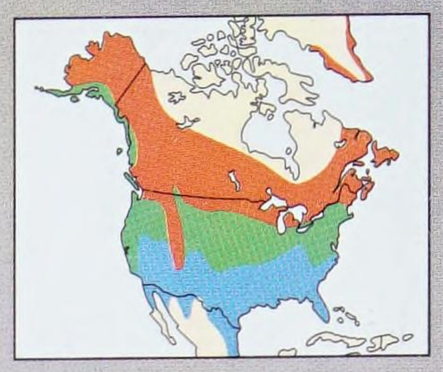
Scientific name: *Aix sponsa*
Length: 18½ inches
Habitat: Woodland swamps, ponds and rivers
Identification: Waterfowl. Male has glossy green and purple head, long crest, black and white face pattern, chestnut breast, buff flanks, black back. Female is gray-brown, teardrop white patch round eye
Similar species: Male's coloring and crest are distinctive, but female resembles the female Mandarin Duck, except for large teardrop-shaped eyepatch

The Wood Duck is widely regarded as one of America's most beautiful water birds. It is widespread across much of the country at different times during the year, although it is rarely seen in its breeding grounds during the winter. One of the few ducks to roost high up in trees, it makes its nest up to 50 feet above the ground, lining a cavity in the tree with soft down; it also uses nesting boxes. The nest holds 8-14 eggs, which are incubated by the female bird for 28-32 days. The young birds leave the nest soon after hatching, dropping down from the nest to follow their mother to water, although they are not able to fly until around 7 weeks. The male adult has a glossy green and purple head with a long, downswept crest, bold black and white face pattern, chestnut breast, buff flanks and a black back. The female is gray-brown with paler spots on the flanks, a small crest, dark back and a teardrop-shaped white patch around the eye. The juvenile resembles the female. The Wood Duck eats aquatic plants, nuts, fruit, insects, small fish and crustaceans.

Fulvous Whistling-Duck

Scientific name: *Dendrocygna bicolor*
Length: 20 inches
Habitat: Marshes, shallow waters, rice fields
Identification: Medium waterfowl. Bright tan, white stripe on flanks, gray bill, dark back with chestnut stripes, blue-gray legs and feet. In flight, wings mainly black, white crescent above the black tail
Similar species: Adult is unmistakable, because of its goose-like shape and distinctive coloring

The Fulvous Whistling-Duck is locally common in the south and often wanders farther north; it prefers wide-open areas. Its nest is usually on the ground hidden in dense vegetation, or rarely built in a cavity of a tree, up to 30 feet above the ground. The nesting place is lined with plants and usually holds 10-20 eggs - although sometimes more than one pair seem to use the same nest at the same time. They are incubated for 24-26 days by both adult birds. The young chicks are downy and leave the nest soon after hatching, but do not fly for 8-9 weeks. Both adult birds are mainly bright tan, with a white stripe on the flanks, white streaks on throat, dark gray bill, dark back with bright chestnut stripes, and blue-gray legs and feet. In flight, the wings are mainly black and a white crescent can be seen above the black tail. More active during the night, the Fulvous Whistling-Duck can often be seen flying in flocks at dawn and dusk. It eats seeds and grain and commonly forages in rice fields, often diving for food.



MALLARD

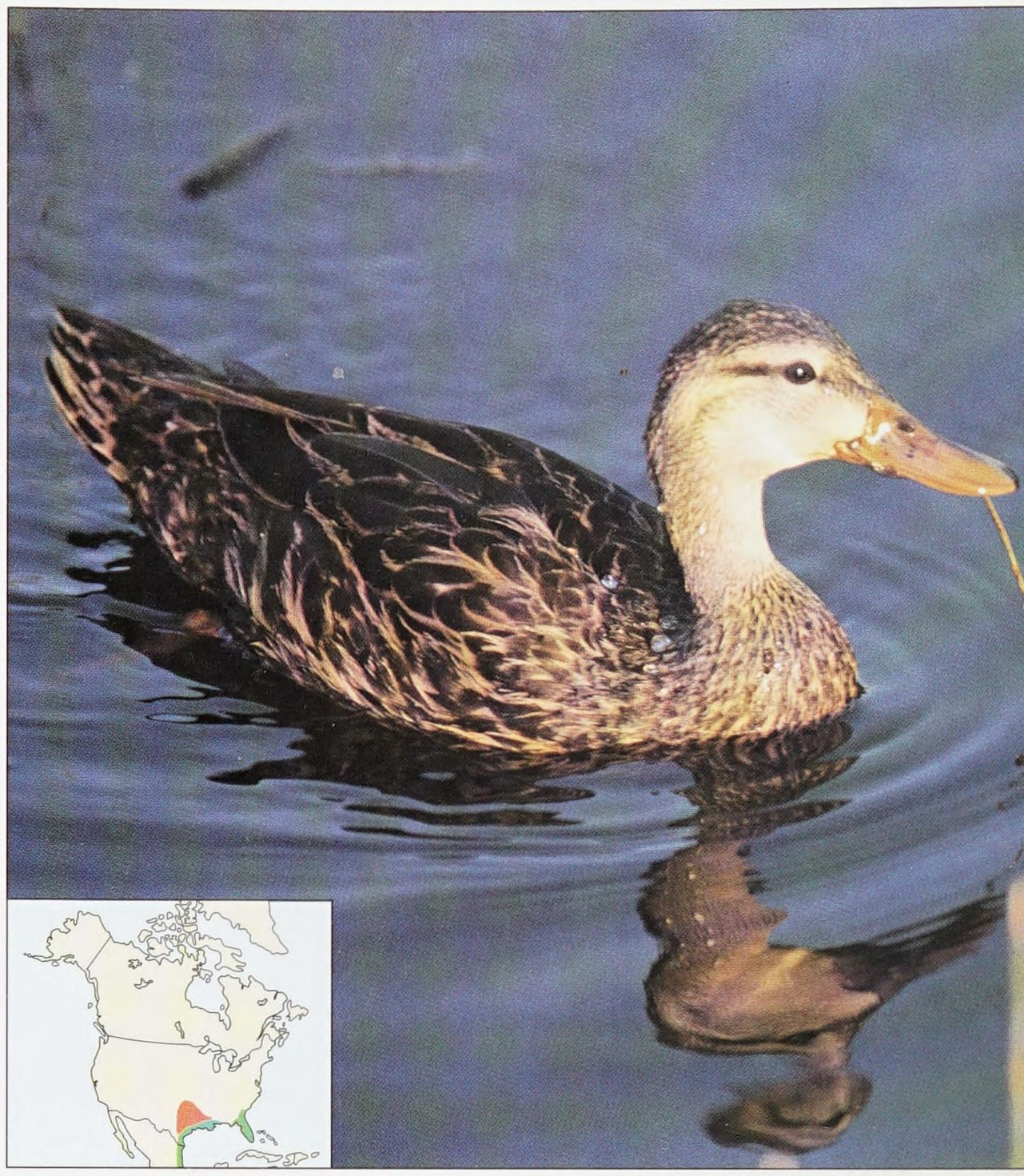
Scientific name:	*Anas platyrhynchos*
Length:	23 inches
Habitat:	Freshwater shallows, tidal marshes
Identification:	Dabbling waterfowl. Male has green head, white collar, yellow bill, gray body. Female is sandy brown, orange bill marked with black. Wings have bright blue patch on upper side, bordered with white
Similar species:	Male easily identified by its metallic green head and neck, female looks very similar to other species but has an orange bill marked with black

The Mallard is probably the most abundant and familiar wild duck in the Northern Hemisphere, and is the ancestor of most domestic ducks. It is common across much of America, not only in the wild but also in semi-wild state around cities and in parks. It nests near water in vegetation, lining a hollow with grass, stems and down, which holds 5-14 eggs. These are incubated for 26-29 days, by the female bird only, and the downy chicks leave the nest soon after hatching but do not fly until 8 weeks later. The male bird (*above*) has a glossy green head and neck with a narrow white collar, yellow bill, chestnut breast and gray body. The female is mottled sandy brown, with an orange bill marked with black. Both have a white tail, and in flight the wings have a bright blue patch on the upper side, bordered on each side with a white stripe, and white wing linings. The juvenile bird resembles the female, but its bill is dull olive.This species also dabbles, tipping tail-up to forage for aquatic plants, snails, insects and small fish.

Mottled Duck

Scientific name: *Anas fulvigula*
Length: 22 inches
Habitat: Coastal marshes
Identification: Dabbling waterfowl. Sandy-brown, yellow bill, wings have blue-green patch on upper side, white wing linings
Similar species: Both sexes look similar to American Black Duck, but have a paler body, plainer throat and face and a blue-green wing patch. Mottled differs from female Mallard by having darker plumage, no white in tail and no black on bill

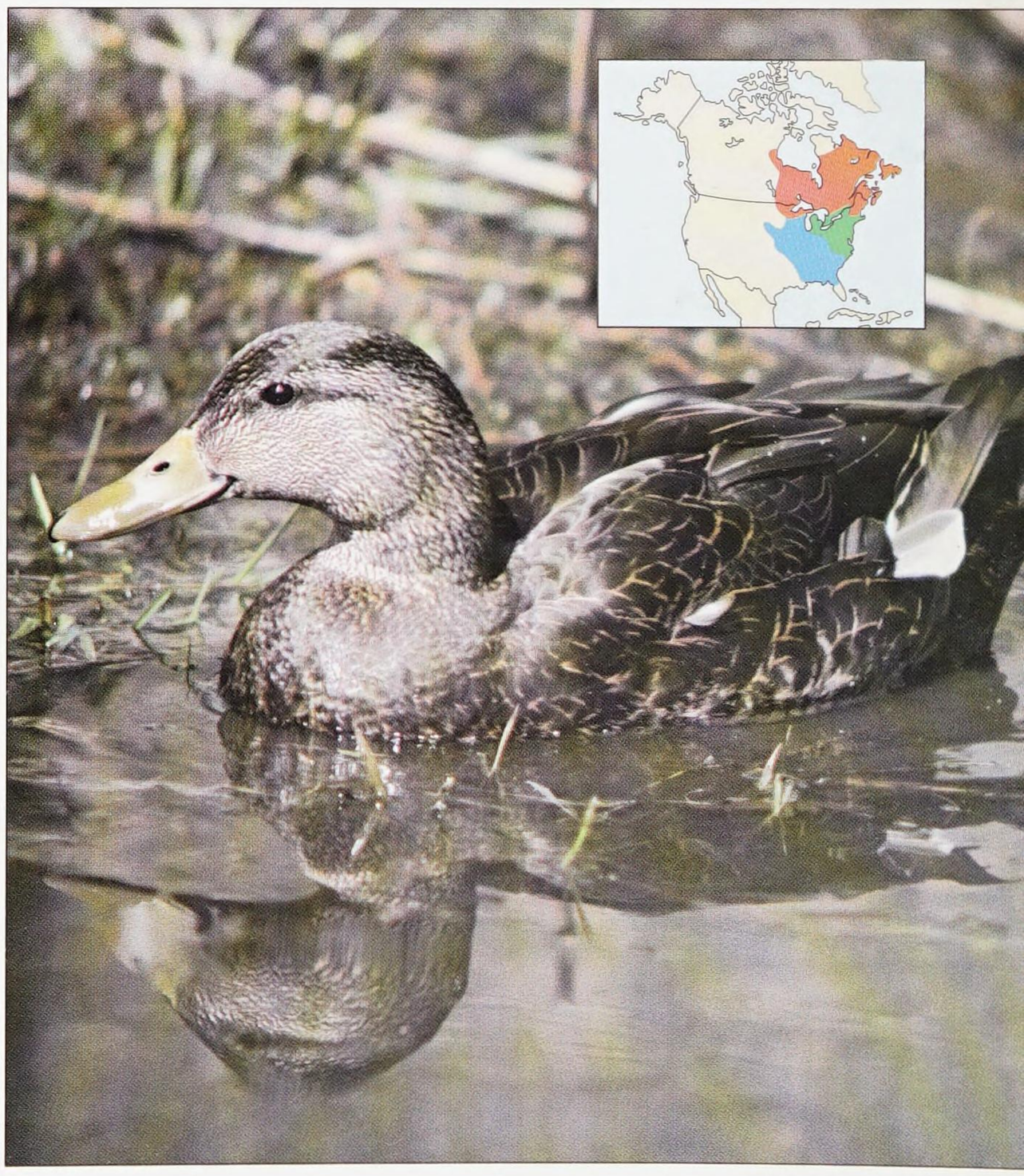
A warm-weather species, the Mottled Duck is found regularly in Florida and along the Gulf coast but has been introduced in some other areas and sometimes ventures quite far inland. It remains in the same area all year round and prefers remote marshes, so its population is relatively stable. It nests in vegetation near water, lining a hollow with grass, reeds and down, which holds 8-11 eggs. These are incubated for 26-28 days, by the female bird only, and the downy chicks leave the nest soon after hatching but do not fly until much later. The adult bird's plumage is mainly a rich sandy-brown, with paler head and neck; both sexes have a yellow bill, although that of the female is duller. In flight, the wings have a blue-green patch on the upper side and white wing linings. This species is also a dabbling duck, eating submerged plants, snails, frogs and seeds.

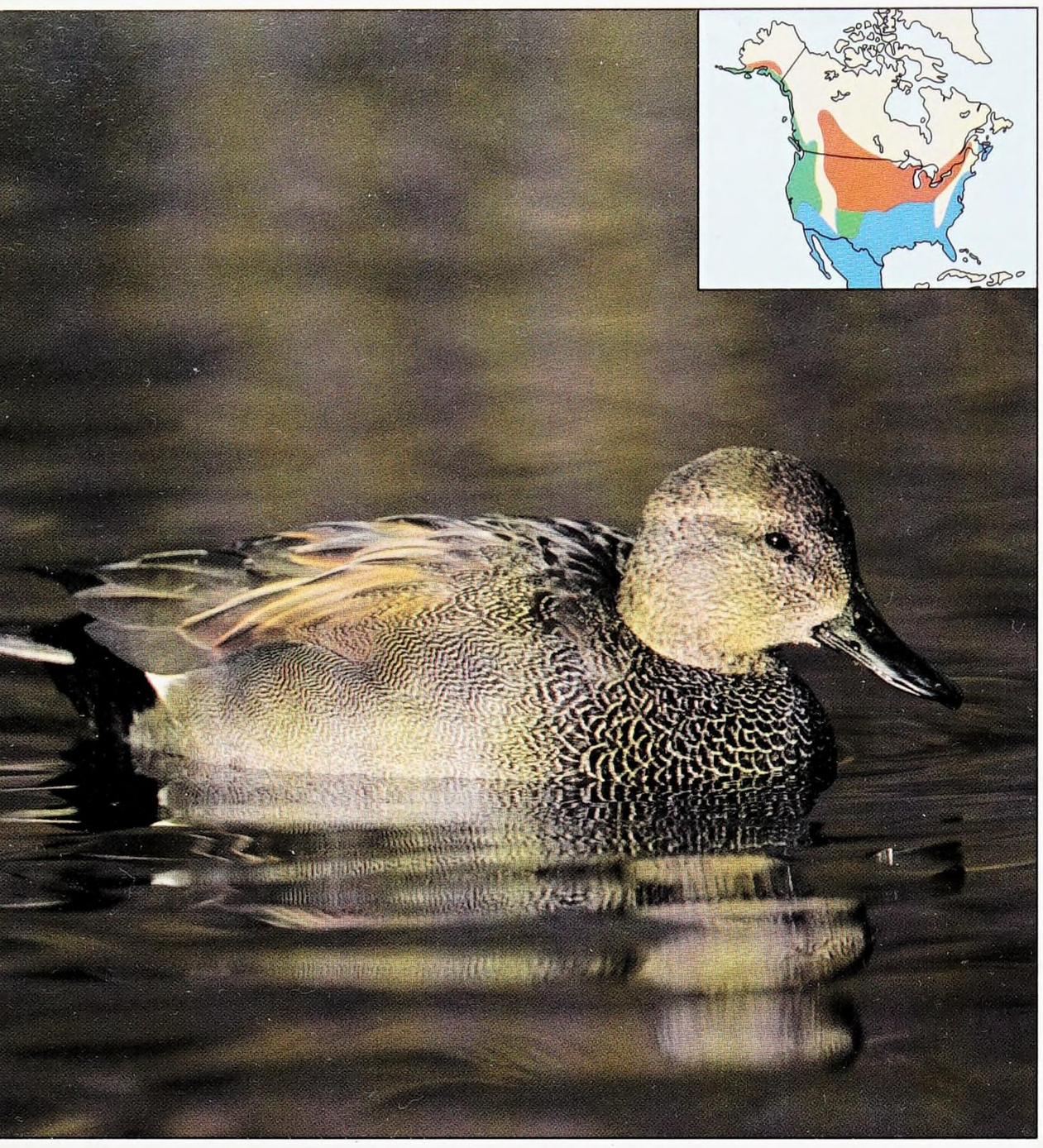


American Black Duck

Scientific name: *Anas rubripes*
Length: 23 inches
Habitat: Woodland lakes and streams, freshwater and tidal marshes
Identification: Dabbling waterfowl. Sooty-brown, yellow bill, wings have violet patch on upper side, white wing linings
Similar species: Both sexes look similar to the female Mallard, but have a darker body and gray head

The American Black Duck is common in the northeast, but its population is declining inland to the west, where it is being replaced by the Mallard. These two species also often interbreed, so hybrids are often seen. The American Black prefers woodland ponds and coastal salt marshes and is a very wary bird, flying away instantly and at great speed if disturbed. It nests in vegetation near water, lining a hollow with grass and stems to hold 5-17 eggs. These are incubated for 26-28 days, by the female bird only, and the downy young leave the nest soon after hatching and are flying 9 weeks later. Despite its name, the American Black Duck is not black; its plumage is a rich sooty-brown, with paler head and neck; the male has a yellow bill and the female olive-green, sometimes mottled with black. In flight, the wings have a violet patch on the upper side and white wing linings. This species rarely goes hungry, dabbling in spring to eat submerged plants but happy to add worms, snails, frogs and seeds to its diet.

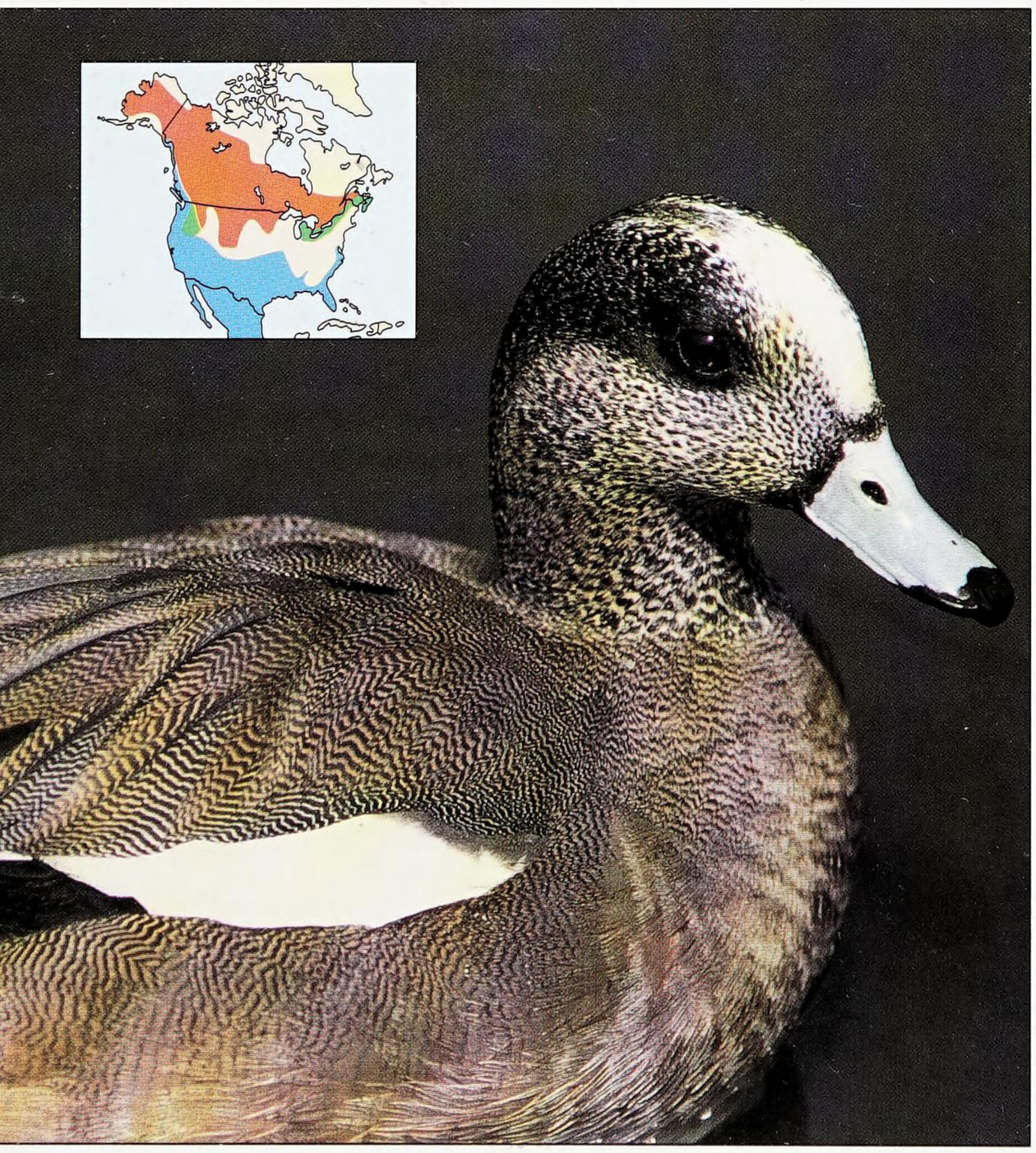




Gadwall

Scientific name:	*Anas strepera*
Length:	20 inches
Habitat:	Shallow ponds
Identification:	Dabbling waterbird. Male is gray, white belly, black tail coverts, chestnut on wings. Female is brown, white belly, steep forehead, gray bill with orange sides
Similar species:	Male is unmistakable, female resembles female Mallard, but has white belly, steeper forehead and bill is gray above and orange below

Fairly common, especially in the west, the Gadwall is quite a plain duck and can often be overlooked. It prefers open areas of shallow water, where it gathers in large flocks. Its nest is a hollow of grass lined with plants and some down, built near water and often on an island, holding 7-15 cream-colored eggs. The female incubates the eggs for 25-28 days, the young chicks leave the nest soon after hatching and begin to fly at 7-9 weeks. The breeding plumage of the male (*left*) is mostly gray, with a sandy-brown head, white belly, distinctive black tail coverts and pale chestnut on the wings. The female is mottled brown and resembles the female Mallard, except for a white belly, steeper forehead and gray bill with orange sides. Both sexes have a square white patch on the trailing edge of the wing that is evident in flight, and sometimes shows as a small white patch on the side of a swimming bird. The Gadwall floats quite high in the water, often picking up food from near the surface. It eats aquatic plants and seeds, with some insects and mollusks.



American Wigeon

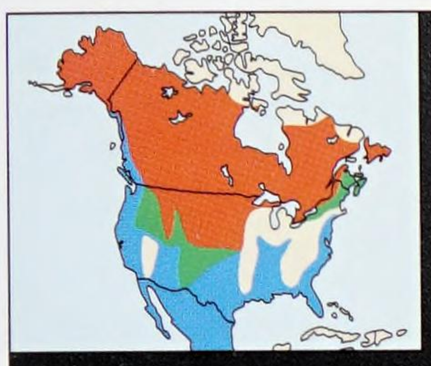
Scientific name:	*Anas americana*
Length:	19 inches
Habitat:	Fields, marshes, shallow water
Identification:	Dabbling waterbird. Male has white crown, green face patch on grayish head, small blue-gray bill. Wings mainly white on upper surface, green patch
Similar species:	Coloring makes both sexes unmistakable

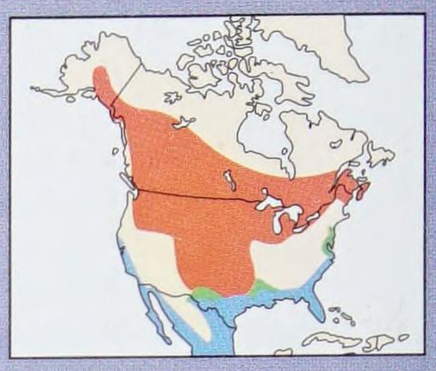
Very common in the west and fairly common elsewhere, the American Wigeon is often seen in flocks on land near water, including semi-urban areas like parks and golf courses. Its nest is a hollow of grass lined with plants and a great deal of down, built in tall reeds often some distance from water, holding 6-12 cream-colored eggs. The female incubates the eggs for around 25 days, the young chicks leave the nest soon after hatching and begin to fly at 7-8 weeks. The plumage of the male (*left*) is mostly brown, with a white belly, grayish head and throat, white crown - hence its nickname, "baldpate" - and long green face patch running back from the eye. In flight, the wings have a green patch and extensive white areas on the upper surface and mainly white wing linings beneath. The female resembles the male, but has no white on the head and no green face patch. Both have a rather small blue-gray bill. Wigeons and diving ducks often winter together - the Wigeon is a dabbler that feeds on aquatic plants, with some insects and mollusks, but the diving ducks reach much further down to dislodge food from the bottom. When its food is scarce, the Wigeon simply steals from the other birds when they come to the surface.

Northern Pintail

Scientific name: *Anas acuta*
Length: 20-26 inches
Habitat: Marshes, open ponds, lakes
Identification: Dabbling waterfowl. Male has white breast with thin white stripe to brown head, gray body, long black tail feathers. Female is buff-brown, long tail, grayish bill. Both sexes have metallic brown-green patch on upper wing and white band on trailing edge
Similar species: Male is unmistakable because of its coloring and long thin tail. Female is similar to many other female ducks, but is larger than most

A lean, elegant dabbler, the Northern Pintail is found across much of America, breeding in the north and wintering in the south. It prefers open areas and is more common in the west than in the east. Its nest is a hollow of plant material, lined with down and holding 6-12 eggs. These are incubated for around 26 days by the female, and the young chicks leave the nest soon after hatching and fly at about 7 weeks. The male (*below*) has a chocolate-brown head, white breast and neck with a thin white stripe running up onto the head, mainly gray body, and black central tail feathers extending beyond the rest of the tail. The female is mottled buff-brown, with a paler head and neck, longish pointed tail and grayish bill. In flight, both sexes have long, pointed wings, and a metallic brown and green patch on the upper wing, with a white band on the trailing edge. The immature bird is similar to the female. The Northern Pintail prefers shallow water as it dabbles for food, foraging on the bottom for snails, small fish and crustaceans and also eating insects and seeds. Like other dabblers, it does not need to run across the water to get airborne, but can simply leap up from the surface into flight.





Blue-winged Teal

Scientific name:	*Anas discors*
Length:	15½ inches
Habitat:	Marshes, open ponds, lakes
Identification:	Small dabbling waterfowl. Male has violet-gray face, white crescent before eye
Similar species:	Coloring makes male unmistakable, female distinguished from female Green-winged Teal by larger bill, more heavily spotted undertail coverts, yellowish legs, and from female Cinnamon Teal by grayer plumage, smaller bill

Very common east of the Rockies, the Blue-winged Teal hates cold weather more than most ducks. It is happy on any water, no matter how small, landing with precision even on what is little more than a large puddle. Its nest is a hollow of grass lined with down, built in dense vegetation near water, and holding 6-15 white or cream-colored eggs. The female incubates the eggs for around 24 days, the young chicks leave the nest soon after hatching and begin to fly at about 6 weeks. The breeding plumage of the male (*above*) is mostly speckled brown, with a violet-gray face and a white crescent in front of the eye. The female is mottled grayish-brown, as is the male during the winter. In flight, the wings have an obvious pale blue patch, and mainly white wing linings beneath. Juveniles are an overall pale brown, with yellowish legs, and they cannot be distinguished from those of the Cinnamon Teal. The Blue-winged Teal filters mud with its bill and eats seeds, aquatic plants, snails and insects, but rarely up-ends like other dabbling ducks, merely dipping its head below the surface of the water. This species was once decimated by hunters, but now the hunting season opens after most of the birds have already migrated.



Cinnamon Teal

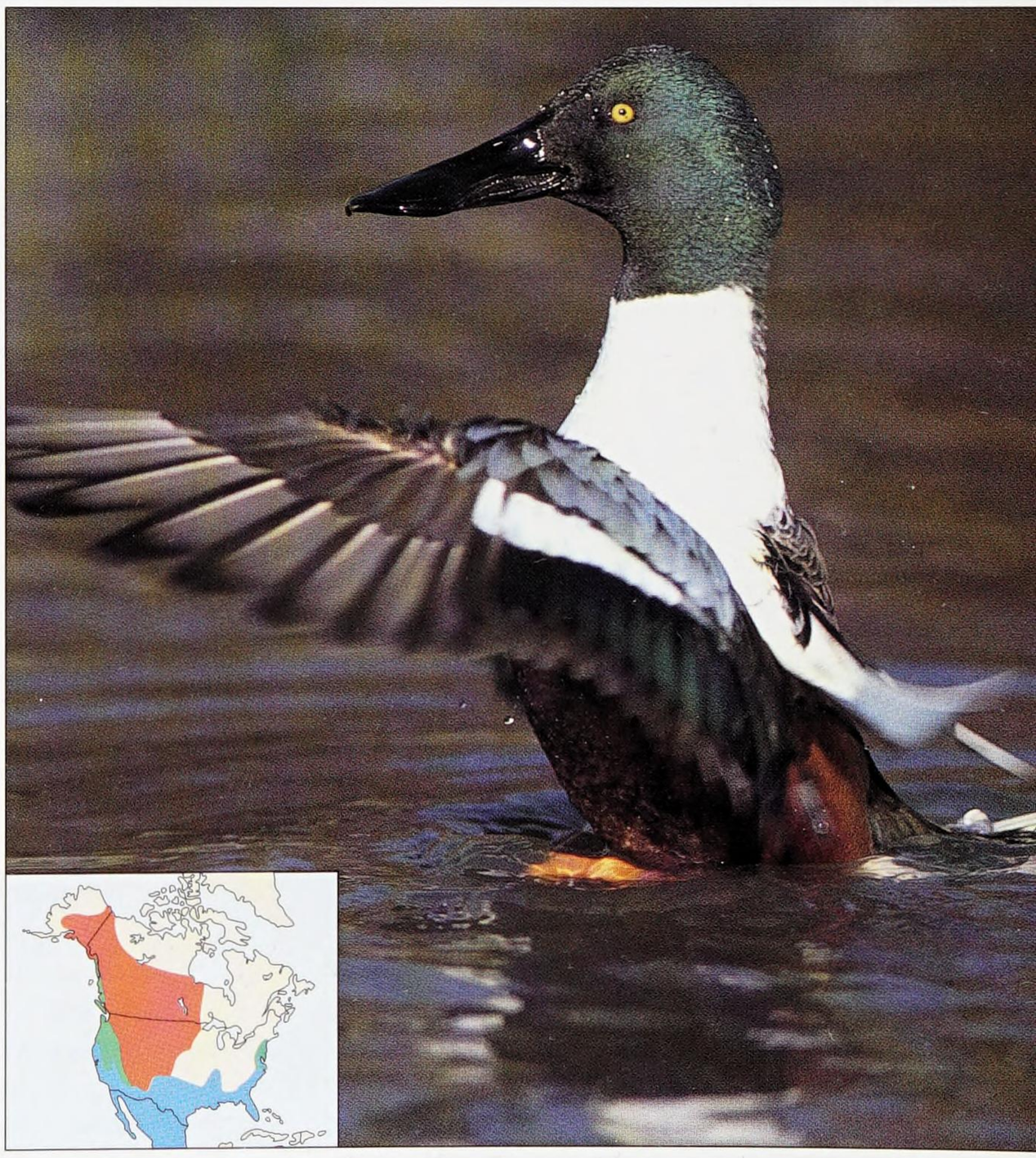
Scientific name:	*Anas cyanoptera*
Length:	16 inches
Habitat:	Marshes, ponds, lakes
Identification:	Small, dabbling waterfowl. Plumage bright cinnamon brown, red eyes
Similar species:	Coloring makes male unmistakable, female distinguished from female Blue-winged Teal only by larger bill, browner plumage. Juveniles cannot be distinguished from those of Blue-winged Teal

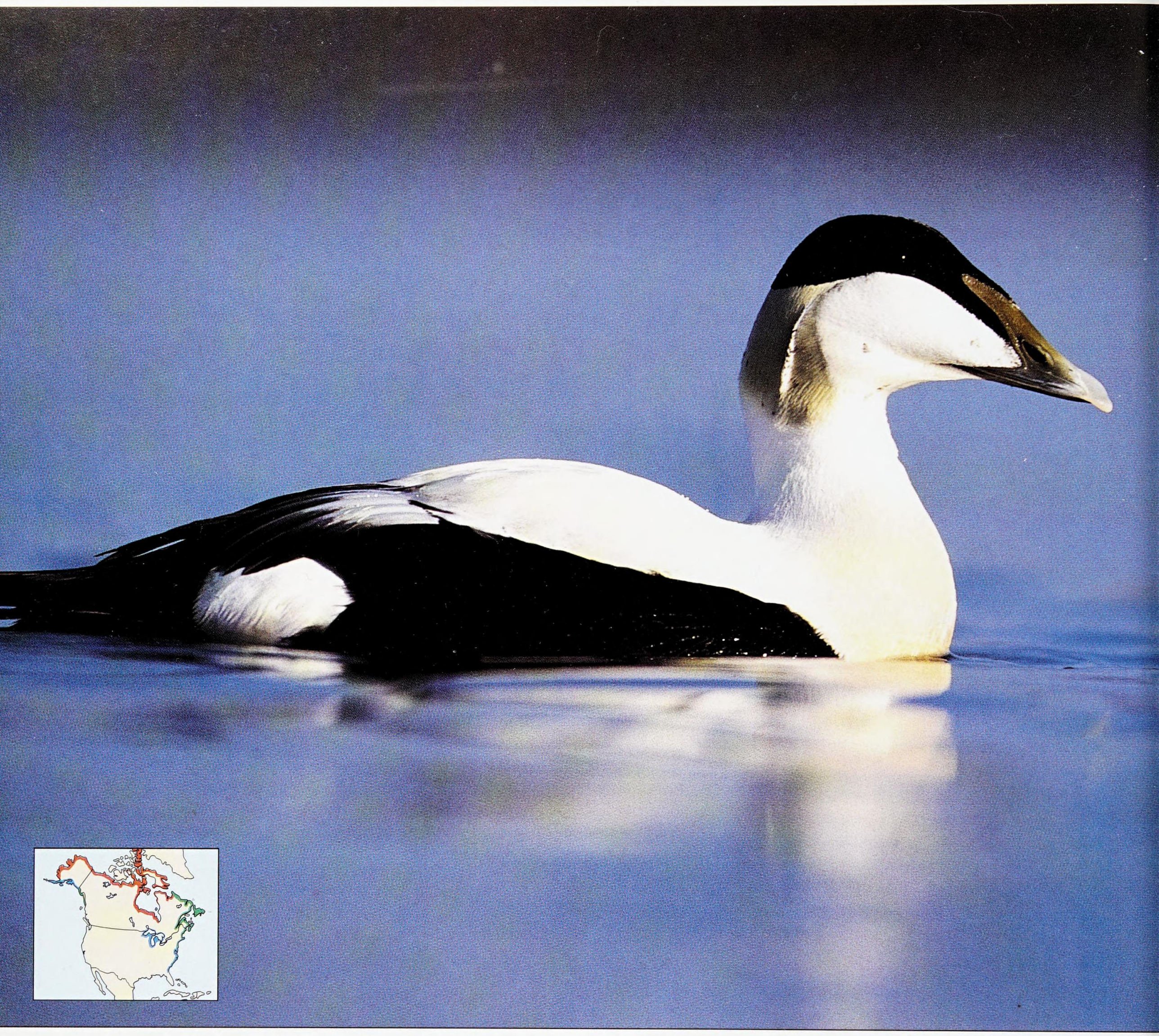
A close relative of the Blue-winged Teal, the Cinnamon Teal is more common in marshes and shallow ponds in the west and rarely seen in the east. Its nest is a shallow cup of grass lined with down, hidden in dense vegetation a short distance from water, and holding 10-12 white or buff-colored eggs. The female incubates the eggs for around 25 days, the young chicks leave the nest soon after hatching and begin to fly at about 7 weeks. The breeding plumage of the male (*left*) is mostly a bright cinnamon brown. The female is mottled brown, as is the male in winter - but it can be distinguished by its red eyes. In flight, the wings are very similar to those of the Blue-winged, with an obvious pale blue patch, and mainly white wing linings beneath. Juveniles are an overall pale brown, with yellowish legs, and are almost identical to those of the Blue-winged Teal. The Cinnamon Teal filters mud with its bill and eats seeds, aquatic plants, snails and insects.

Northern Shoveler

Scientific name:	*Anas clypeata*
Length:	19 inches
Habitat:	Marshes, ponds, bays
Identification:	Dabbling waterfowl. Male has green head, white breast, chestnut-brown sides, white in front of black tail. Female is mottled brown, big gray and orange bill
Similar species:	In winter plumage, the male has a white crescent like that of the Blue-winged Teal; in breeding plumage it has a green head like the Mallard, but with a white breast. Both sexes can be distinguished by the large, spatulate bill that is longer than the head

The Northern Shoveler is common to abundant in the west and is increasing in the east. Its nest is a hollow of grass lined with down and concealed in dense vegetation near water, holding 6-14 greenish or buff eggs. The female incubates the eggs for around 26 days, the young chicks leave the nest soon after hatching and begin to fly at about 7 weeks. The breeding male (*right*) has a green head, white breast, chestnut-brown sides and white in front of a black tail. The female and juveniles are a drab mottled brown. In winter the male's head and breast turn grayish, with a whitish crescent in front of the eye. Both sexes have a large, spatulate bill that is longer than the head, that of the breeding male is grayish, otherwise it is tinged with orange. In flight, the wings are very similar to those of the Blue-winged, with an obvious pale blue patch, and mainly white wing linings beneath. The Northern Shoveler needs shallow open areas where it can sieve the water with its large bill for crustaceans, insects, mollusks, seeds and aquatic plants.





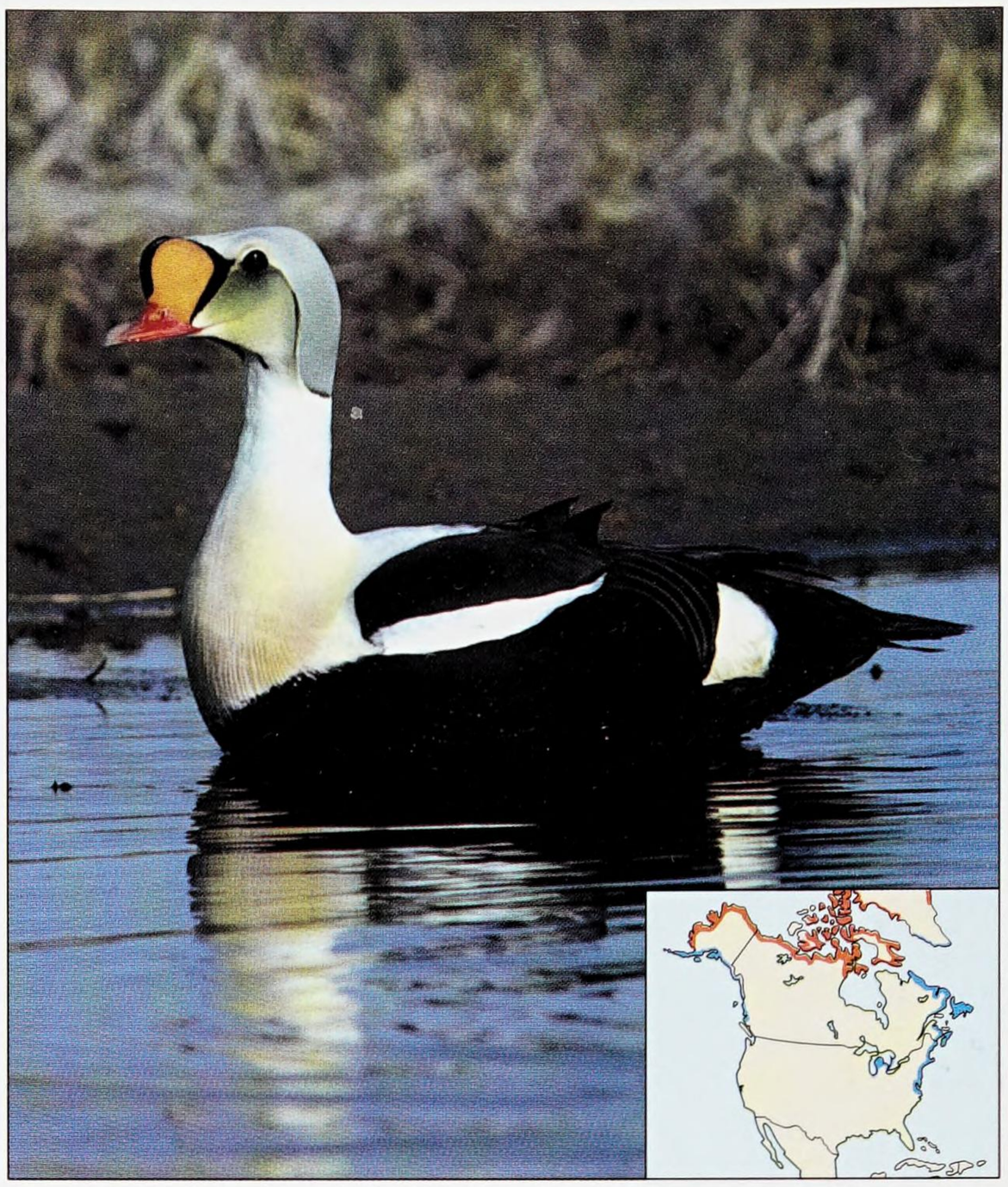
Common Eider

Scientific name:	*Somateria mollissima*
Length:	24 inches
Habitat:	Shallow bays, rocky shores, tundra ponds
Identification:	Diving sea duck. Female is brown. Male has white back, neck and breast, black below, white head, black cap, orange bill
Similar species:	Male is distinctive, female similar to female King Eider, but is larger, with even bars on sides and back

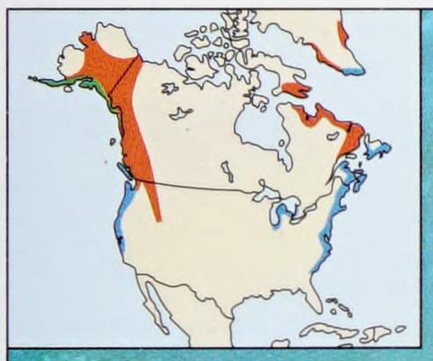
The largest sea duck in America, the Common Eider is abundant in the far north, and is seen around the Great Lakes and on the east coast as far south as New England. It breeds on tundra ponds, usually in colonies, but prefers the open ocean in other seasons. Its nest is a hollow lined with plant stems and large amounts of down, usually out in the open away from the water on rocky islets, where eggs and chicks are safe from predators. It lays 4-7 greenish or buff eggs, which the female incubates for around 24-27 days. The downy young chicks leave the nest soon after hatching, but do not fly until about 8 weeks. The breeding male (*above*) has a white back, neck and breast, black below, white head with light green nape, black cap, orange bill. The female varies in color from rusty-brown to gray, with darker fine barring on sides and back. Juvenile males are dark and attain mature plumage by their fourth winter. Both sexes have a short neck, sloping forehead and a long sloping bill, which gives them a distinctive profile. The Common Eider eats mollusks, starfish, crustaceans and fish. The down from the female's breast is used for sleeping bags, pillows and down coats but is collected from the nest, which does not involve killing the bird.

King Eider

Scientific name:	*Somateria spectabilis*
Length:	22 inches
Habitat:	Tundra ponds, coastal waters, Great Lakes
Identification:	Diving sea duck. Female is brown with darker crescent markings. Male has orange shield over orange bill, blue-gray head, white breast and wing patch, black body
Similar species:	Male is distinctive, female similar to female Common Eider, but is smaller, has more rounded head and crescent-shaped bars on sides and back



Smaller than the Common Eider, the King Eider occupies a similar territory. It is common in the far north, increasing on the Great Lakes and can be seen on the east coast as far south as Virginia. It breeds on tundra, but winters at sea - often far north in openings in the pack ice. Its nest is a flattened hollow lined with large amounts of down, usually near the water, in which it lays 4-7 greeny-buff eggs, which the female incubates for around 23 days. The downy young chicks leave the nest soon after hatching. The breeding male (*right*) has a distinctive orange shield over its orange bill, blue-gray head, white breast and wing patch, and a mainly black body. The female is a rich brown, with darker crescent-shaped barring on sides and back. The juvenile male has a brown head, pinkish bill and brownish body, and attains mature plumage by its third winter. The King Eider dives down up to 180 feet to find mollusks, starfish, crustaceans and fish. Eiders dive down from the surface of the water, propelling themselves downward and then back up with their wings - literally flying underwater.



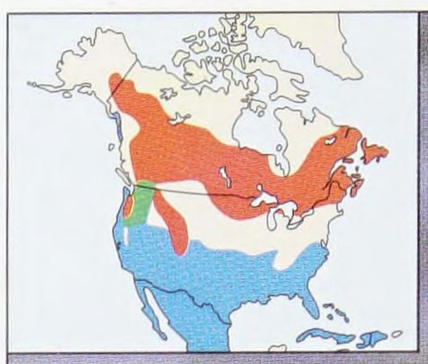
Harlequin Duck

Scientific name:	*Histrionicus histrionicus*
Length:	16½ inches
Habitat:	Rocky coasts, swift mountain streams
Identification:	Sea duck. Favors turbulent water. Female is dark with white patches on head. Male is slate blue, bright chestnut flanks, white markings outlined in black
Similar species:	Male is distinctive, female similar to female scoters, but is smaller and has a much shorter bill

The Harlequin Duck is usually found in small flocks and prefers very turbulent water on rocky coasts, moving inland to swift mountain streams for breeding. It is regularly seen on the east coast as far south as Virginia but is rare around the Great Lakes. Its nest is a hollow lined with grass and down, concealed in thick vegetation or under boulders near rushing water, in which it lays 5-10 buff eggs. The female incubates them for around 27-33 days and the downy chicks leave the nest soon after hatching, flying about 6 weeks later. Even very young chicks can dive swiftly and negotiate turbulent water with ease. The breeding male is slate blue with bright chestnut flanks, and has bold white markings on head and wings outlined in black. The female and non-breeding male are dark brown, with two or three small white patches on the side of the head. The Harlequin Duck dives to the bottom, using both feet and wings, to forage for snails, crabs, small fish and aquatic insects.

Ring-necked Duck

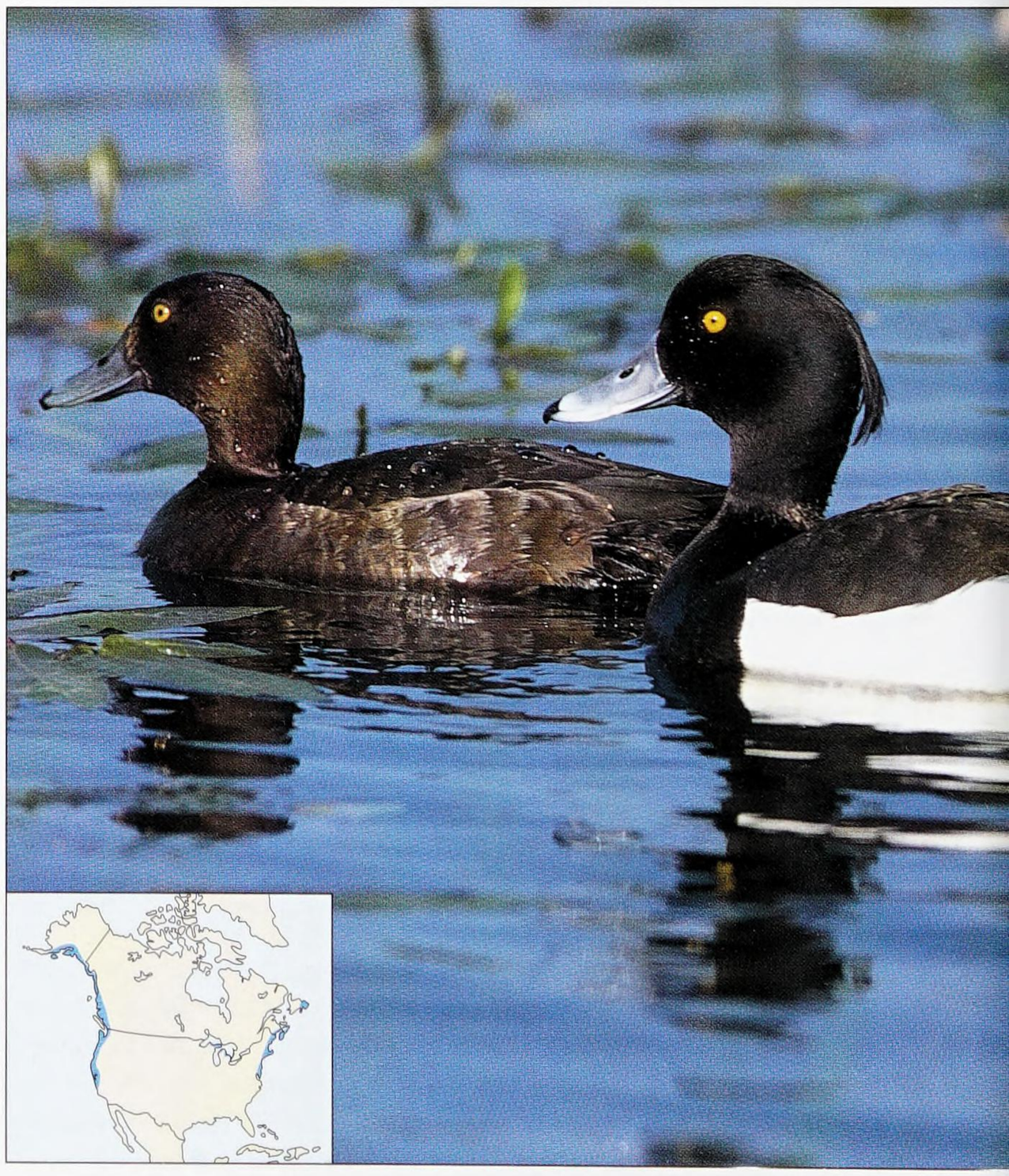
Scientific name: *Aythya collaris*
Length: 17 inches
Habitat: Freshwater marshes, woodland ponds, small lakes
Identification: Diving duck. Male has black back and head, white vertical bar between gray sides and black chest, two vertical white bars on blue-gray bill. Female is gray-brown, dark crown, white eye ring, pale area at base of bill
Similar species: Can be mistaken for Tufted Duck, the male of which has white sides instead of gray and a long tuft on the back of the head. Female scaup is similar coloring but has more contrasting white patch at base of bill



The Ring-necked Duck prefers sheltered fresh water, but is sometimes seen in coastal marshes in the south during winter. Its nest is a hollow of grass and down, in vegetation near water, in which it lays 6-14 greenish eggs. The female incubates them for around 26 days and the downy chicks leave the nest soon after hatching, flying about 7-8 weeks later. The breeding male (*right*) has a black back and head, a white vertical bar separates its pale gray sides from a black chest, and there are two vertical white bars on its blue-gray bill. The dark chestnut-brown neck-ring is rarely apparent. The female is gray-brown, with a dark crown, white eye ring, and a pale area at the base of its bill. When flying, both sexes have a gray stripe along the trailing edge of the wing. The Ring-necked Duck dives to probe the bottom for aquatic plants and crustaceans and also eats insects and snails. Although considered very edible, it is rarely hunted because it does not gather in large flocks in winter.

Tufted Duck

Scientific name: *Aythya fuligula*
Length: 17 inches
Habitat: Seashore, sheltered ponds, coastal lagoons
Identification: Diving duck. Male is black with white sides, round head with long black tuft, gray bill with dark tip. Female is gray-brown, white at base of bill, white under tail
Similar species: Can be mistaken for Ring-necked Duck, but male has white sides instead of gray and a long tuft on the back of the head, female does not have pale cheeks. In flight has white to trailing edge of wing and can resemble Greater Scaup

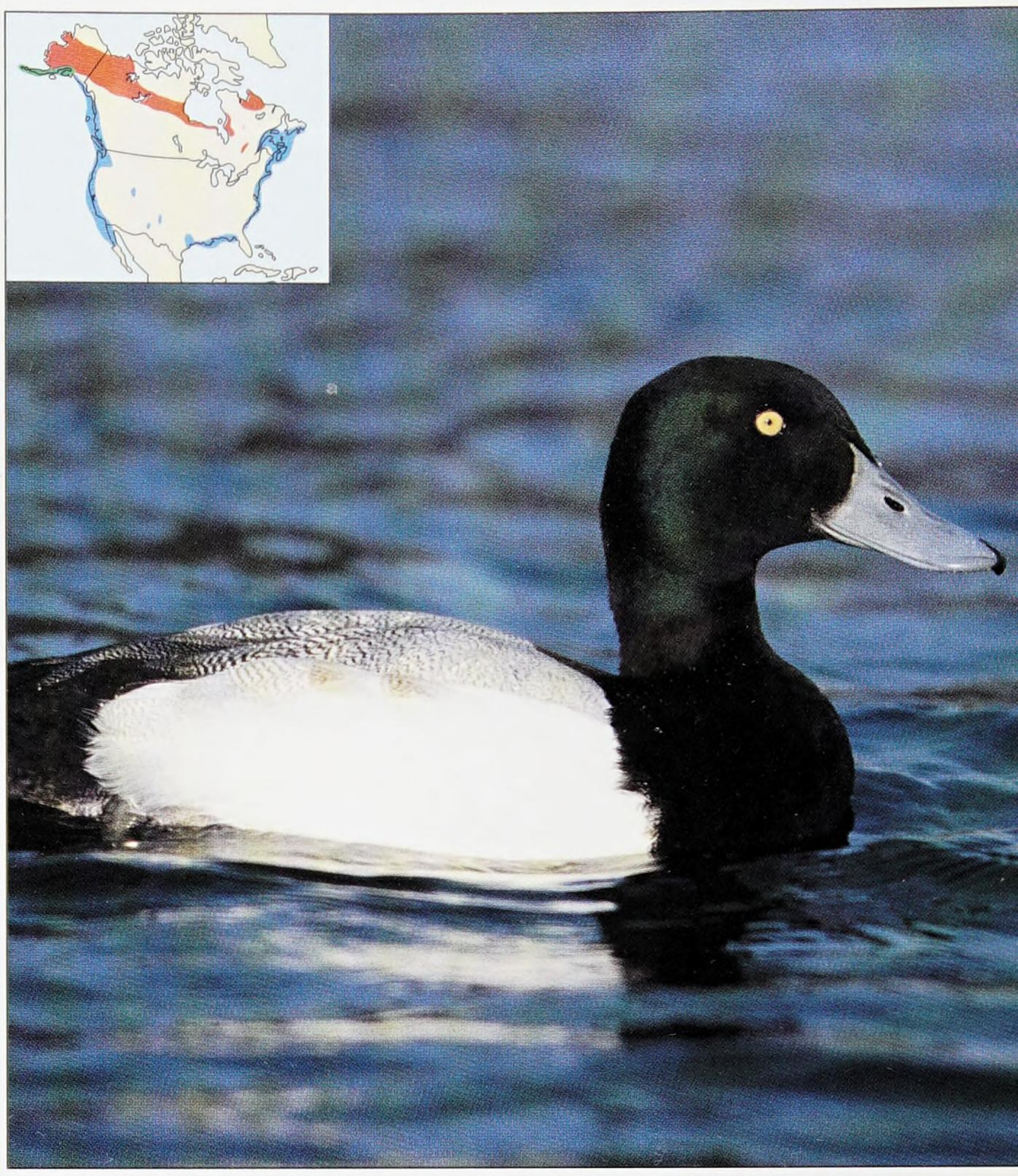


An Old World species, the Tufted Duck is a regular visitor to Alaska and in winter along the east coast to Maryland and the west coast to southern California. It prefers coastal areas, but is also very rarely seen around the Great Lakes. Its nest is a down-lined hollow of grass and stems, in vegetation near water, in which it lays 6-10 buff or greenish eggs. The female incubates them for 23-28 days and the downy chicks leave the nest soon after hatching, flying about 7 weeks later. The breeding male is mainly black, with white sides, a round head with long black tuft, and a gray bill with dark tip. The female is dark brown, with paler brown flanks, white at the base of the bill and under the tail, and often a short tuft on the back of the head. When flying, both sexes have a white stripe along the trailing edge of the wing. The Tufted Duck dives to forage for aquatic plants and mollusks and also eats insects and frogs.

Greater Scaup

Scientific name: *Aythya marila*
Length: 18 inches
Habitat: Wet tundra, lakes and rivers, coastal bays
Identification: Diving duck. Male has black head, breast and tail, white below, light with wavy gray lines above. Female is gray-brown, white face patch at base of bill
Similar species: Almost identical to Lesser Scaup, but Lesser has peak at back of crown and smaller bill, in flight less white on wing

A coastal bird, the Greater Scaup is less common inland but may be seen as it migrates south from its breeding grounds in the north. Its nest is a hollow lined with plant matter and down, near water in dense vegetation, in which it lays 7-10 green eggs. The female incubates them for around 24-28 days; the young leave the nest soon after hatching, and first fly about 5-6 weeks later. The Greater Scaup has a rounded head, higher toward the front and sloping down at the back and quite a large blue-gray bill. The breeding male (*right*) has black head with a green sheen, black breast and tail, and is white below and light gray with wavy darker gray lines above. The female and non-breeding male are gray-brown, with paler sides and a white face patch at base of bill; in spring and summer the female may also have a white crescent ear patch. When flying, both sexes have a long white stripe along the trailing edge of the wing. The Greater Scaup is often seen with other diving ducks, foraging for aquatic plants and crustaceans.

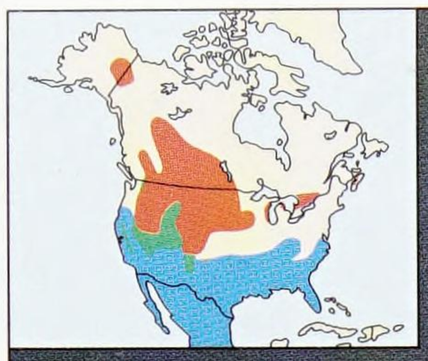


Lesser Scaup

Scientific name: *Aythya affinis*
Length: 16½ inches
Habitat: Marshes, small lakes, ponds, sheltered bays, inlets
Identification: Diving duck. Male has black head, breast and tail, white below, light with wavy gray lines above. Female is gray-brown, white face patch at base of bill
Similar species: Almost identical to Greater Scaup, but has peak at back of crown and smaller bill, in flight less white on wing

The Lesser Scaup is very common inland in winter but may also be seen in coastal waters; like the Greater Scaup, it breeds in the north. Its nest is a hollow lined with some grass and down, not too far from water in tall vegetation, in which it lays 9-12 olive-brown eggs. The female incubates the eggs for around 27 days, covering them with down when she leaves the nest. The young leave the nest soon after hatching, and first fly about 7 weeks later. The Lesser Scaup has a rather pointed head with a peak at the back, and a slightly smaller blue-gray bill than the Greater Scaup. The breeding male has a black head with a purple sheen, black breast and tail, and is whitish below and light gray with wavy darker gray lines above. The female (*right*) and non-breeding male are gray-brown, with paler sides and a white face patch at the base of the bill; in spring and summer the female may also have an indistinct white crescent ear patch. When flying, both sexes have a white stripe along part of the trailing edge of the wing. The Lesser Scaup is often seen in large flocks, foraging for aquatic plants and crustaceans.





REDHEAD

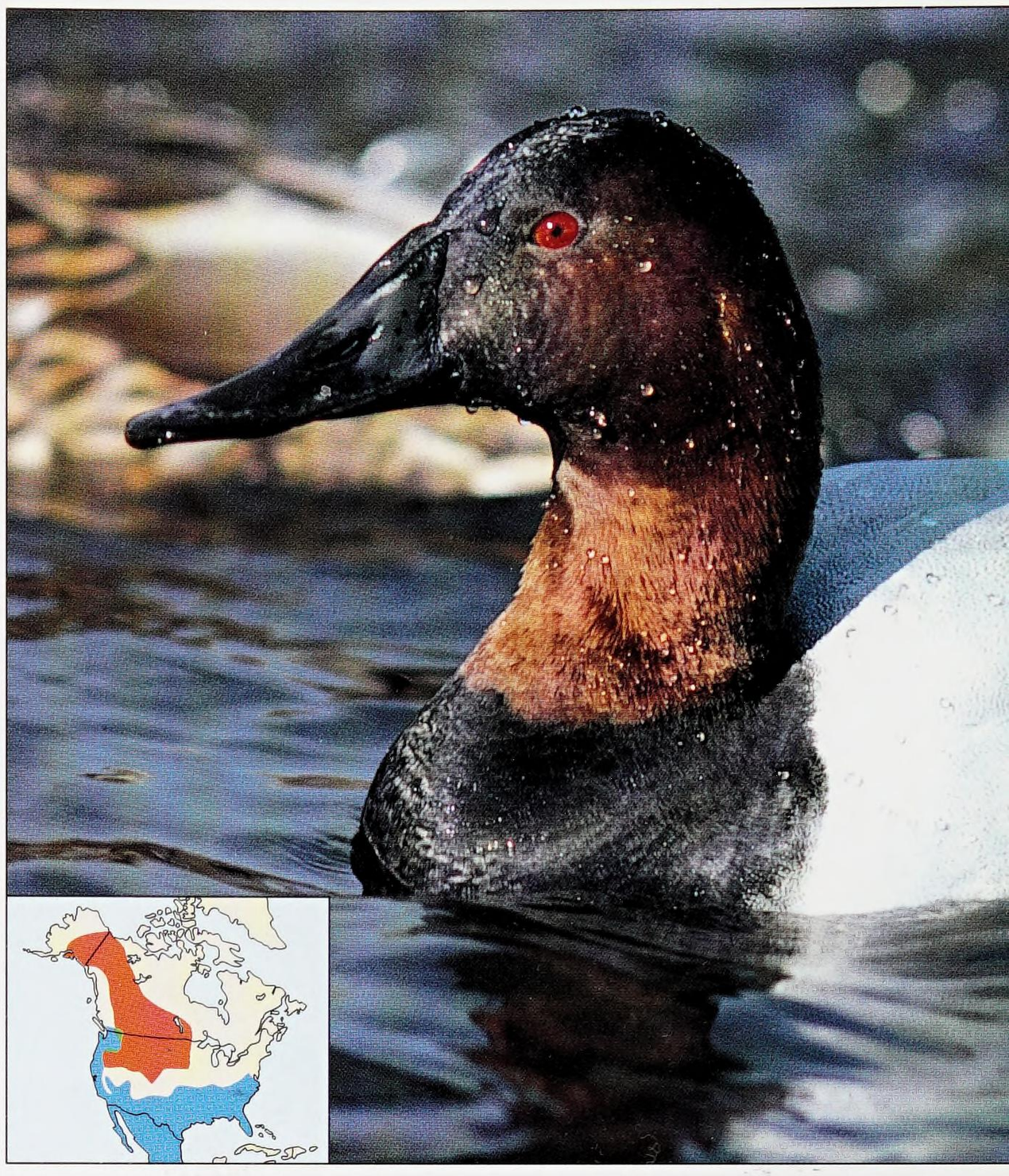
Scientific name:	*Aythya americana*
Length:	19 inches
Habitat:	Marshes, ponds, lakes
Identification:	Diving waterfowl. Rounded head, short blue-gray bill with black tip. Male has chestnut head and neck, pale gray back and sides, black chest and tail. Female is brown, darker crown
Similar species:	Like Canvasback, but has shorter two-color bill, rounder head, contrasting pale stripe on wing

Very similar in coloring to the Canvasback, but smaller, the Redhead is found across much of south and western America. It breeds in marshes, building a nest of reeds sparsely lined with down, concealed in dense vegetation near deep open water. It lays around 12 eggs, but then often goes on to lay more eggs in the nests of other ducks. The female incubates the eggs for around 24 days and the chicks leave the nest soon after hatching, flying at around 8-10 weeks. The male (*above*) has a rounded chestnut head and neck, black chest, pale gray back and sides, and black under the tail. The female is uniform brown with darker crown. The bill of both birds is shortish, blue-gray with a black tip, and in flight they have a contrasting pale stripe on the trailing edge of the wing. The Redhead mainly eats the foliage and seeds of aquatic plants, insects and mollusks. It was once much more numerous but draining of its habitat has caused a sharp decrease in population, so hunting is now banned in some areas.

Canvasback

Scientific name: *Aythya valisineria*
Length: 21 inches
Habitat: Prairie marshes, lakes, bays
Identification: Diving waterfowl. Long black bill and sloping forehead give distinctive shape to head. Male has chestnut head and neck, whitish back and sides. Female is brownish-gray, pale brown head and neck
Similar species: Like Redhead, but has longer black bill, sloping forehead, no contrasting pale stripe on wing

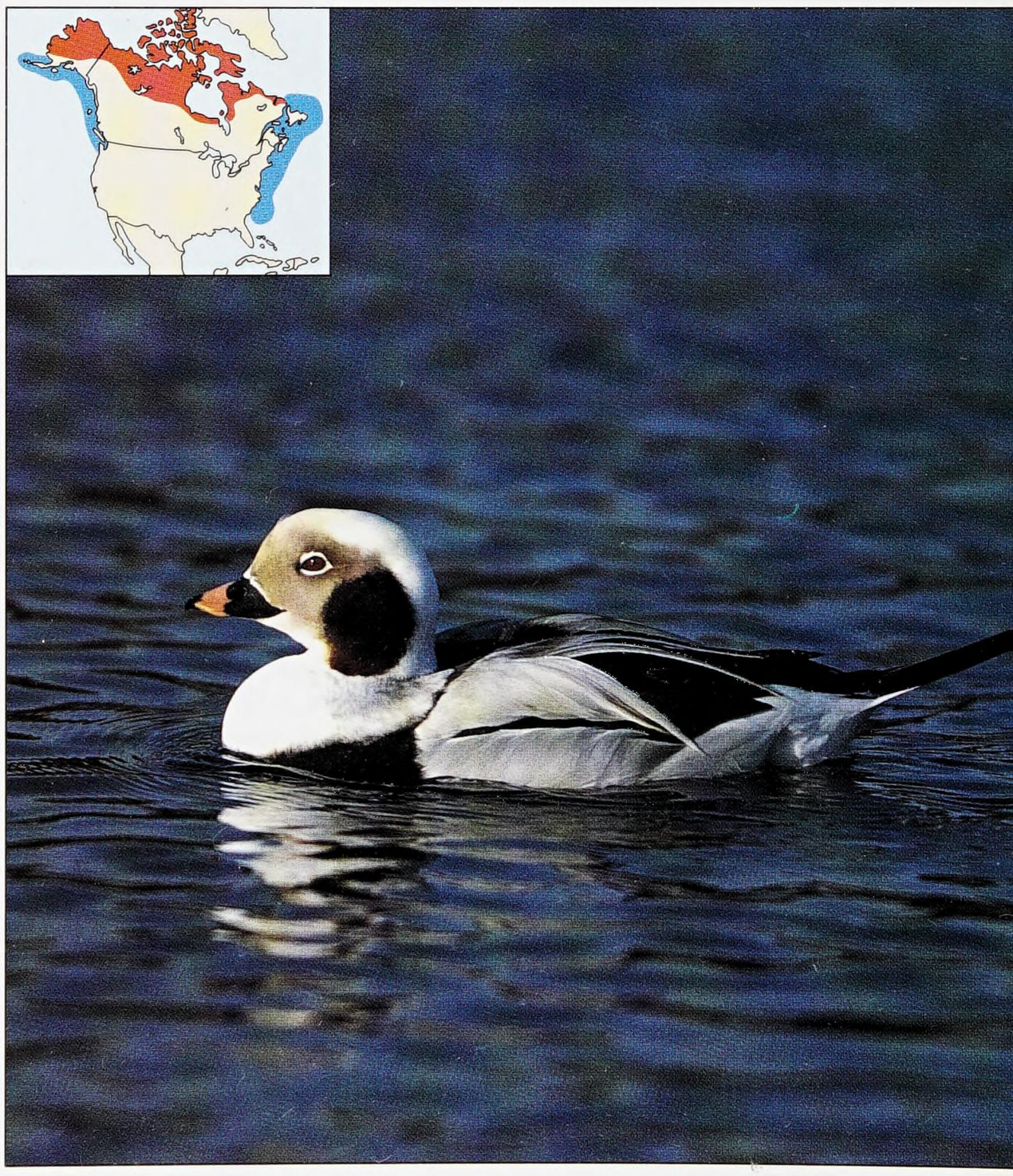
One of the largest diving ducks, the Canvasback is found across much of America, sometimes in large flocks. A wary bird, it tends to stay towards the center of large lakes or bays, rarely coming ashore except to breed in the marshes of the northwest. Its nest is a solid cup made of grass and lined with down, concealed in tall vegetation near deep open water. It lays 7-9 greenish eggs, which are incubated for 24-27 days by the female bird. The chicks leave the nest soon after hatching and fly at around 10-12 weeks. The Canvasback has a long black bill and a sloping forehead, which give a distinct shape to the head. The male (*right*) has a chestnut head and neck, with whitish back and sides. The female is brownish-gray with pale brown head and neck. The Canvasback mainly eats the roots and tubers of aquatic plants. A favorite with hunters; it was once much more numerous but draining of its habitat has caused a sharp decrease in population, although this now seems to have stabilized.



Oldsquaw

Scientific name: *Clangula hyemalis*
Length: 16-22 inches
Habitat: Great Lakes, tundra ponds, shallow seas
Identification: Medium-sized sea duck. Male has very long tail, mostly white, with dark brown back and breast, pink band on stubby bill. Female has shorter tail, dark bill, plumage paler. Swift careening flight, noisy three-part yodeling call
Similar species: Long tail is similar to Northern Pintail, but patterning and coloring different

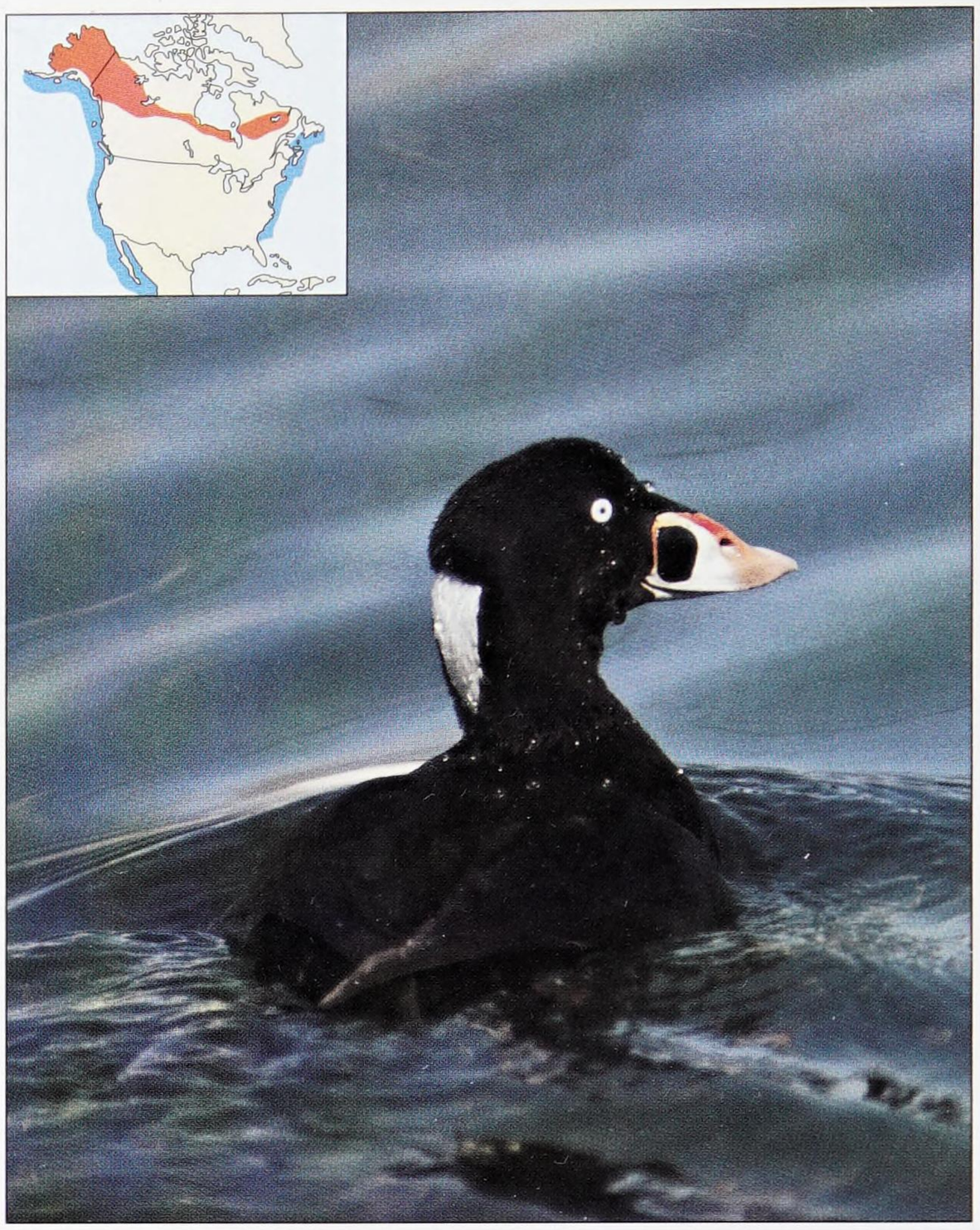
Sometimes known as the Long-tailed Duck, the Oldsquaw likes cold water and stays offshore when not nesting. It winters in small groups on the ocean along both northern Pacific and Atlantic coasts, preferably over a sandy bottom, and breeds on tundra ponds. Its nest is a hollow of grass and down, concealed in vegetation or among rocks near water, which holds 6-11 olive or buff eggs. The female incubates these for around 23-25 days and the chicks leave the nest soon after hatching, flying at around 5 weeks. The male bird's very long tail is obvious in flight, but can be hidden underwater when it is swimming. In winter and spring the male (*right*) is mostly white, with dark brown back and breast, and a pink band on a stubby bill. By early summer, it has become mostly dark, with pale gray face patch, and later acquires a pale crown. The female has no long tail, bill is dark, plumage whiter overall in winter, darker in summer. Oldsquaws can be identified in flight by their swift, seemingly uncontrolled flight, dark wings and noisy three-part yodeling call. They dive up to 200 feet below the surface to forage for aquatic plants, shrimp and mollusks.



Surf Scoter

Scientific name: *Melanitta perspicillata*
Length: 20 inches
Habitat: Tundra, woods near water, coastal waters
Identification: Medium-sized sea duck. Female is dark with pale cheek patches. Male is black with white patches on forehead and nape, large bill with white, black and red-orange markings
Similar species: Male is distinctive, female similar to female White-winged Scoter, but has no white wing patches

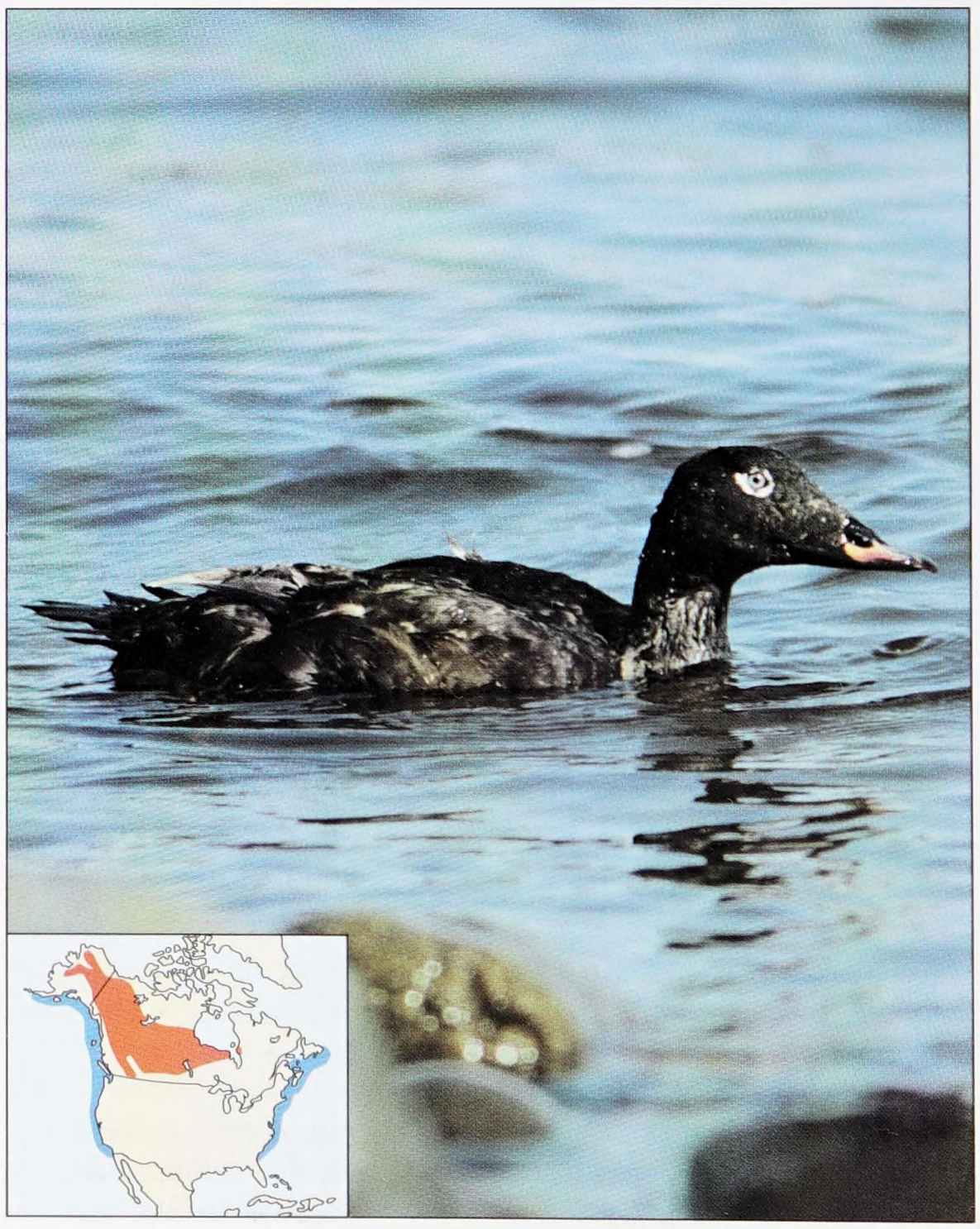
The Surf Scoter is common along the coast much of the year, especially on the Pacific. It can usually be seen some distance offshore, but also floats in small groups near jetties. It breeds on tundra and forest bogs in Alaska, but spends only a short period there. Its nest is scraped out of bare ground and lined with grass and down, often some distance from water on marshy ground. The down not only insulates the eggs from the cold earth, but is also used to cover the eggs when the female goes off to feed. The 5-8 buff or pinkish eggs are incubated by the female bird only and the young chicks leave the nest soon after hatching. The adult male (*right*) is black with white patches on forehead, nape and round the eye, and a large bill with white, black and red-orange patterning. The female is dark with black crown and pale cheek patches, the mature female often has a white patch on the nape. Juvenile birds are similar to the female but have a whitish belly and often white face patches. The Surf Scoter dives for crustaceans and aquatic plants. Courtship displays from several males around a single female can be seen in winter in sunny weather, until the female chooses her partner.

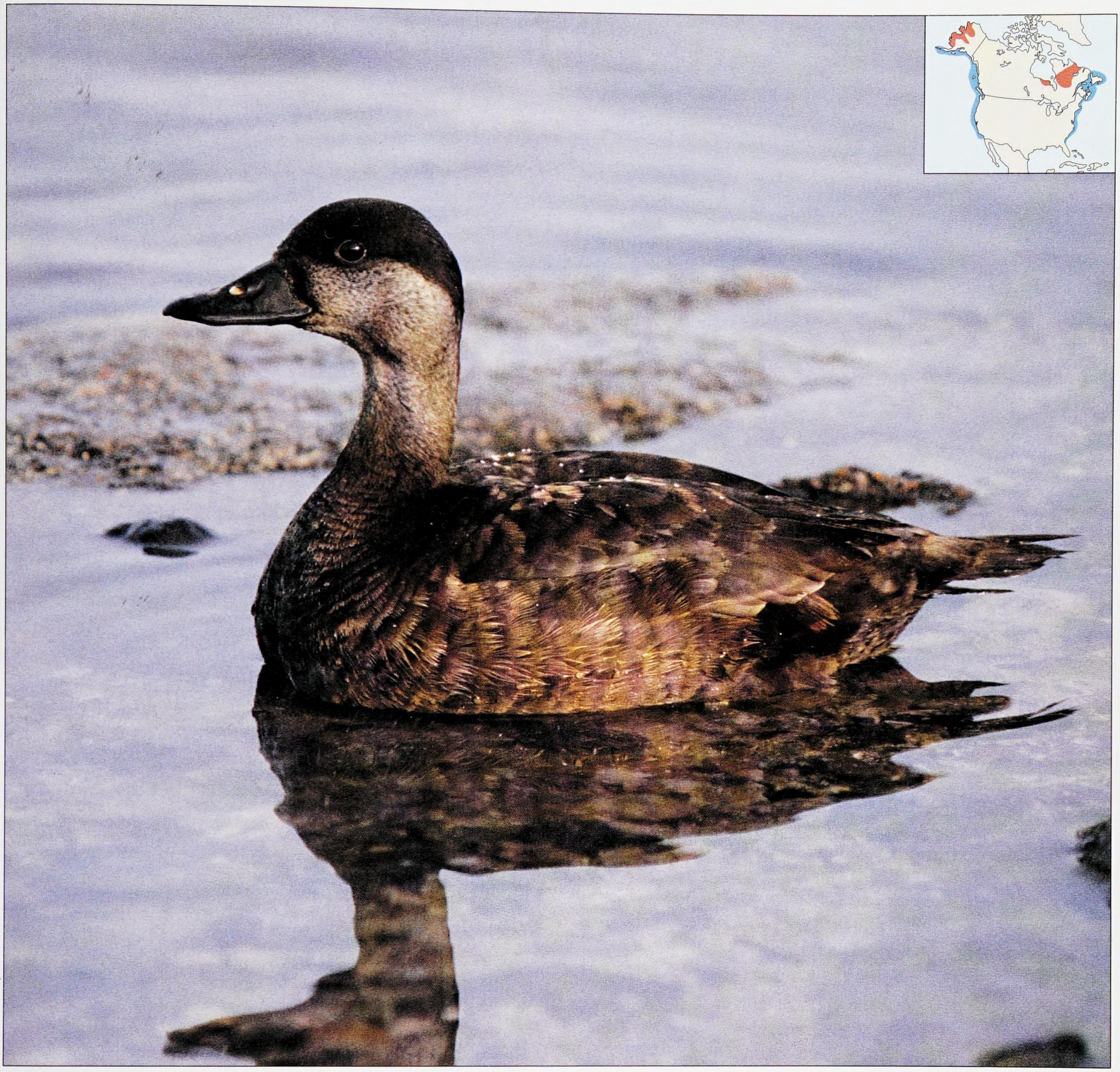


White-winged Scoter

Scientific name: *Melanitta fusca*
Length: 21 inches
Habitat: Inland lakes, rivers, coastal waters
Identification: Medium-sized sea duck. Female is dark with light cheek patches. Male is black with white "comma" shaped patch round eye, both sexes have white wing patch
Similar species: Male is distinctive, female similar to female Surf Scoter but has white wing patches and no black crown

The largest of the scoters, the White-winged is common in coastal areas in winter and on inland lakes and rivers in the breeding season, but is rarely seen in the south. Like other scoters - and often with them - it can be seen floating in groups on the water, and such a gathering is known as a "raft". The White-winged prefers sandy rather than rocky shores in winter and breeds in northern forest areas. Its nest is a hollow in bare ground lined with grass and down, sometimes exposed and sometimes concealed in thick vegetation. The 6-14 pinkish eggs are incubated by the female bird only for around 28 days and the young chicks leave the nest soon after hatching and fly at around 9-11 weeks. The adult male (*right*) is black with a white "comma" shaped patch round the eye, and both sexes have a white wing patch that shows in flight and also sometimes on the side of a resting bird. The female is dark with white cheek patches, which can be indistinct. Juvenile birds are similar to the female but have more distinct face patches and a whitish belly. The White-winged Scoter eats crustaceans, mollusks, sand dollars and aquatic plants.





Black Scoter

Scientific name:	*Melanitta nigra*
Length:	19 inches
Habitat:	Tundra, woodland waterways, Great Lakes
Identification:	Medium-sized sea duck. Female is dark with pale face and throat and black cap. Male is black with bright orange spot on upper bill
Similar species:	Male is distinctive, female similar to female Surf Scoter, but has paler foreneck, rounder head, smaller bill

Scoters are often found in mixed flocks, but the Black Scoter, previously known as the Common Scoter, has a smaller range than the other two species commonly found in North America. It breeds in coastal areas in western Alaska and in some areas of northern Canada, migrating to winter on both the west and east coasts of America - although it rarely makes it very far south. Its nest is a hollow of grass and down, concealed in vegetation near water, in which it lays 5-8 buff or pinkish eggs. The female incubates them for around 27-31 days and the young chicks leave the nest soon after hatching, although they are not able to fly until about 6 weeks later. They do not mature enough to breed until the third summer after they hatch. The adult male is entirely black, except for a bright orange knob at the base of its bill. The female (*above*) and the immature male are dark, with much paler face and foreneck, and a black cap. The Black Scoter can dive down to 100 feet or more beneath the surface of the water, to forage for mollusks, crustaceans and aquatic insects. It is particularly fond of blue mussels, which are found on both the east and west coast.



Common Goldeneye

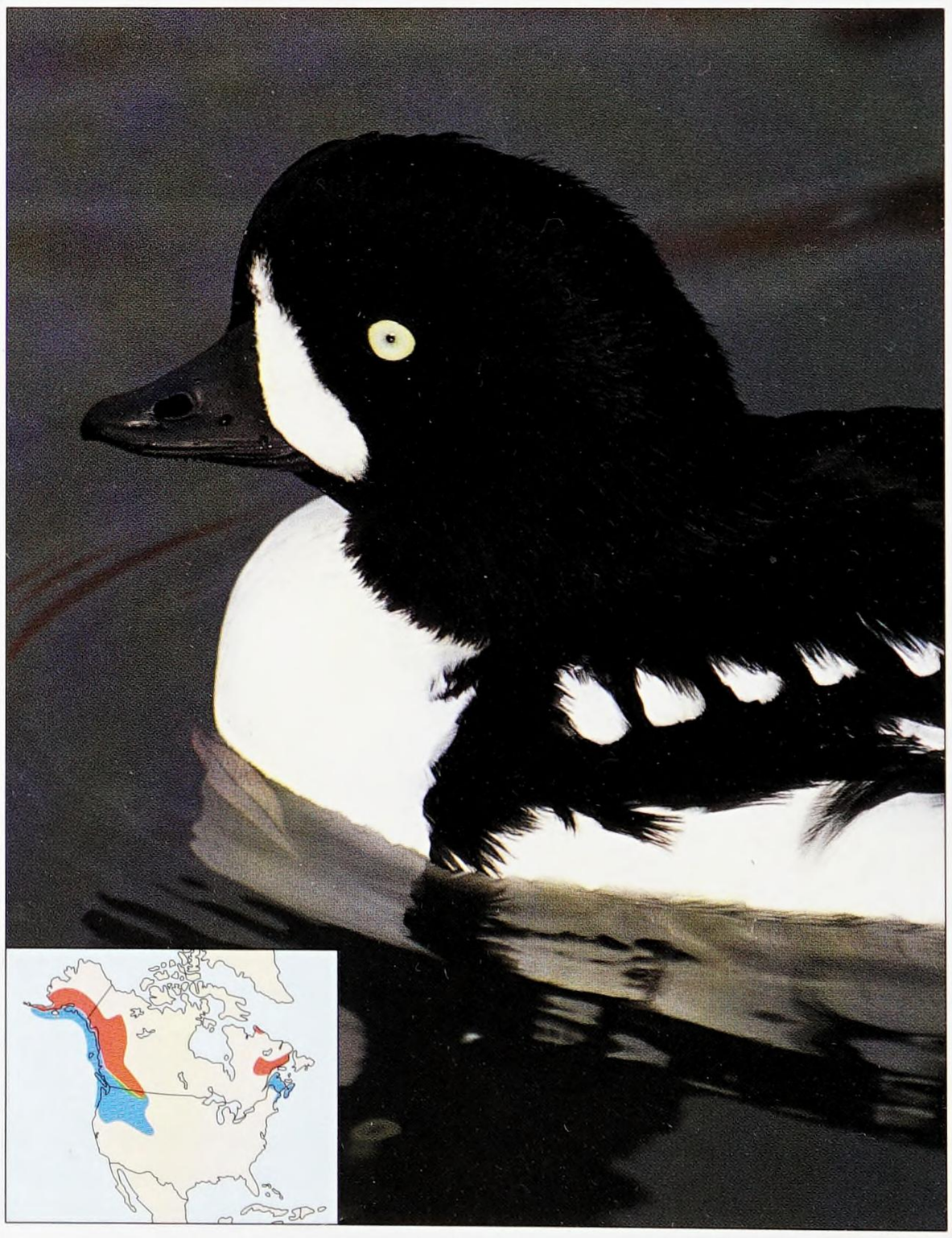
Scientific name:	*Bucephala clangula*
Length:	$18\frac{1}{2}$ inches
Habitat:	Lakes, rivers, coastal waters
Identification:	Medium-sized diving duck. Male has white spot before yellow eye, green-black head and back, white chest and sides. Female has chocolate brown head, gray body
Similar species:	Barrow's Goldeneye has smaller bill, steeper forehead, male has white crescent instead of spot before eye, more black on back

The Common Goldeneye is found across much of America, usually in small flocks. It breeds around lakes and bogs near coniferous forests, spending the winter in coastal areas or on inland lakes and rivers. Its nest is high up in a tree - it often takes over an abandoned woodpecker's nest - and sometimes quite far from water. The cavity is lined with down and holds 6-15 greenish eggs, which the female does not start to incubate until the last is laid. Once begun, incubation takes 27-32 days and the chicks leave the nest soon after hatching, dropping up to 60 feet to the ground since they cannot fly until around 8-9 weeks. The adult bird has a large, rather triangular head, with sloping forehead and long bill. The male (*left*) has a round white spot before its yellow eye, a black head and back, and white chest and sides. The female has a chocolate brown head on a gray body; its dark bill is sometimes yellow near the tip. In flight, the wings make a whistling sound, giving rise to this species' nickname of "Whistler".The Common Goldeneye mainly eats aquatic plants and insects, mollusks and crustaceans.

Barrow's Goldeneye

Scientific name:	*Bucephala islandica*
Length:	18 inches
Habitat:	Lakes, ponds, rivers, coastal waters
Identification:	Medium-sized diving duck. Male has white crescent before yellow eye, purple-black head, black back and sides, white chest, row of white spots on side. Female has chocolate brown head, gray body
Similar species:	Common Goldeneye has larger bill, sloping forehead, male has white spot instead of crescent before eye, less black on back. Females not safely distinguished apart

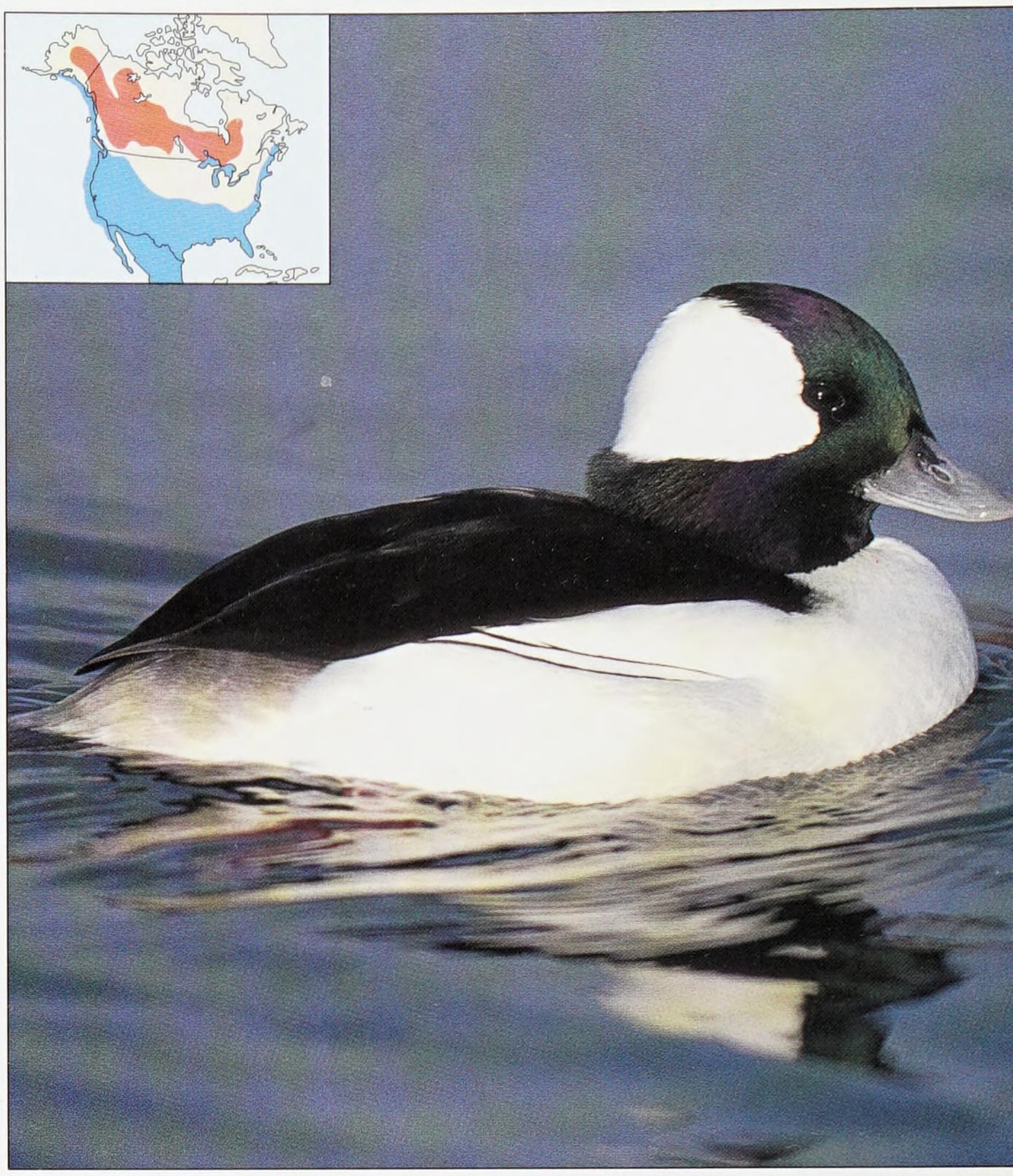
A diving duck which prefers cold water, Barrow's Goldeneye is found across western America, with a few also in the northeast. It is much rarer than the Common Goldeneye but they are sometimes seen together in small flocks. Barrow's breeds around open lakes and small ponds, spending the winter in coastal areas or on inland lakes and rivers. Its nest is high up in a tree - often an abandoned woodpecker's nest - and sometimes quite far from water. The cavity is lined with down and holds 9-10 greenish-white eggs, which the female does not start to incubate until the last is laid. Once begun, incubation takes 32-34 days and the chicks leave the nest soon after hatching, dropping up to 50 feet to the ground since they cannot fly until around 8 weeks. The adult bird has a large, oval head, with a steep forehead and a shortish bill. The male (*right*) has a crescent-shaped white spot before its yellow eye, a purple-black head, black back and sides, white chest and a row of white spots on each side. The female has a dark-brown head on a gray body; its dark bill is pinkish-yellow. Like the Common, in flight the wings make a whistling sound. Barrow's Goldeneye mainly eats aquatic insects, mollusks and crustaceans.



Bufflehead

Scientific name: *Bucephala albeola*
Length: 13½ inches
Habitat: Woodland lakes and ponds, sheltered bays, rivers
Identification: Small diving duck. Male has a white patch on black head, black back, white chest and sides. Female has gray head with white ear spot, gray back, white chest and belly
Similar species: Has similar coloring to Goldeneye, but is smaller. Hooded Merganser has similar head pattern, but different body coloring

The smallest of the diving ducks, the Bufflehead is common across much of America at different times of the year and is often seen in small flocks. It breeds around lakes and shallow ponds, spending the winter in coastal areas or on inland lakes and rivers. Its nest is in a tree, often an old woodpecker's nest or other cavity. The hole is lined with feathers and down and holds 6-12 buff eggs, which the female starts to incubate when the last is laid. Incubation takes 29 days and the chicks leave the nest soon after hatching, dropping up to 20 feet to the ground as they cannot fly until 7-8 weeks. Once they are all down, the female looks after them alone until they can fly with her to join the males. The adult bird has a relatively large head, with a short bill. The male (*right*) has a white patch like a headscarf on a green and purple glossed black head, black back, white chest and sides. The female has a gray head with an oval white spot behind the eye, dark gray back, white chest and belly. The Bufflehead flies fast and usually close to the water; when disturbed the flock often rises but settles back into its original place. This species dives to forage for aquatic insects and plants, snails and crustaceans.



Ruddy Duck

Scientific name: *Oxyura jamaicensis*
Length: 15 inches
Habitat: Freshwater wetlands, lakes, bays, salt marshes
Identification: Small diving duck, long stiff tail feathers. Male has chestnut-brown body, dark cap, white cheeks, bright blue bill in breeding season. Female brownish with pale cheeks crossed by single dark line
Similar species: Coloring and stiff tail feathers make this species distinctive

The Ruddy Duck is a small diving bird that is common in many areas across America and is often seen in large flocks. It breeds in freshwater wetlands, spending the winter on lakes, bays and salt marshes. Its nest is a floating woven mass of vegetation anchored in dense reeds and lined with feathers and down, which holds 5-17 large whitish eggs. The female incubates the eggs for 24 days, but both parent birds care for the ducklings. The chicks leave the nest soon after hatching, but cannot fly until 6-7 weeks. The adult bird has stiff tail feathers, which are often carried on or below the water surface, but can be raised in display. The breeding male has a bright chestnut-brown body, black cap and tail feathers, white cheeks and belly, and bright blue bill. The female (*right*) and the winter male are gray-brown with pale cheeks, the cheek of the female is crossed by a single dark line, both have a gray bill. The Ruddy Duck flies close to the water, with rapid beats of its rather short wings. It is a deep water diver, mainly eating the seeds and foliage of aquatic plants. Even the hatchlings dive to feed, unlike other species which start by picking off the surface.





Hooded Merganser

Scientific name:	*Lophodytes cucullatus*
Length:	18 inches
Habitat:	Woodland ponds, rivers, backwaters
Identification:	Diving duck. Male has white crest with black border that can open up like a fan, black back, white below, cinnamon sides. Female is brownish with paler crest
Similar species:	Similar head pattern to male Bufflehead, but different body coloring

The smallest of the North American mergansers, the Hooded is common in the east but uncommon in the west. It prefers fresh water near the coast in the winter and in the breeding season is found on woodland ponds, rivers or backwaters in small flocks. Its nest is in a tree cavity or old log, lined with a mass of down and holding 8-12 white eggs. The female incubates these for 28-32 days and the chicks leave the nest soon after hatching and begin to fly at 9-10 weeks. The adult bird has a long, flat head, with a dark bill. The male has a white crest with black border that can open up like a fan in display, giving the head a rounded shape, a black back, white below, and cinnamon-colored sides. The female (*above*) is brownish, with a paler, bushy crest, and is smaller than other mergansers. At the start of the breeding season, the male performs an exciting courtship dance, then swims round and round the chosen female in a further display. The Hooded Merganser flies with rapid wingbeats and both sexes show a small white patch on the inner wing. It eats aquatic invertebrates, small frogs, newts and small fish.

Common Merganser

Scientific name: *Mergus merganser*
Length: 25 inches
Habitat: Woodland lakes and rivers
Identification: Large diving duck. Male is mostly white, with a black back and green head. Female is gray with a rusty-red head and white throat
Similar species: The male Mallard and Northern Shoveler also have green heads, but different shape and body coloring. Female is like female Red-breasted Merganser, but contrast between head and neck coloring is sharper. Also like male Redhead, but lacks black chest

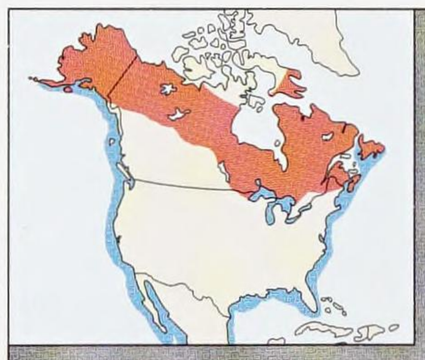
The largest of the North American mergansers, the Common can be found across much of North America at different times of the year - sometimes in quite large flocks. It is mostly seen on fresh water, preferring wooded lakes and rivers in the breeding season. Its nest is in a tree cavity, old log, or among rocks, lined with a mass of down and holding 6-12 pale buff eggs. The female incubates these for 28-32 days and the chicks leave the nest soon after hatching and begin to fly at 9-10 weeks. The adult bird has a long body and sits low in the water. The male (*right*) is mostly white, with a black back, green head and red bill. The female is gray with a bright, rusty-red head and a white throat. Like other mergansers, the Common Merganser has a long, narrow bill with serrated edges and a hooked upper mandible - they are called "sawbills" by hunters. It dives to pursue its prey underwater; it eats aquatic invertebrates, small frogs, newts and small fish.



Red-breasted Merganser

Scientific name: *Mergus serrator*
Length: 23 inches
Habitat: Woodlands near water, sheltered coastal areas
Identification: Diving duck. Male has gray sides, white collar, dark red breast, black back and green head with shaggy crest. Female is gray with a pale rusty-red head and whitish throat
Similar species: Male is darker than male Common Merganser, and has crested head. Female is like female Common Merganser, but paler and lacks contrast between head and neck coloring.

Unlike the other mergansers, the Red-breasted prefers brackish or salt water in winter, and is found all along both North American coasts around jetties and beaches. In the summer breeding season, it migrates to woodlands near lakes and rivers in the north. Its nest is a hollow in dense vegetation or among rocks, lined with grass and down and holding 8-10 olive-buff eggs. The female incubates these for 28-35 days and the chicks leave the nest soon after hatching and begin to fly at about 8 weeks. The male has gray sides, a white collar, dark red breast, black back and green head with shaggy crest. The female (*right*) is gray with a whitish throat that blends into a pale rusty-red head. The Common Merganser flies very fast and low over the water and the adult male shows a white patch at the top of the upper wing, crossed with two black bars. This species eats mainly small fish, but also aquatic invertebrates, small frogs, and newts.





Turkey Vulture

Scientific name:	*Cathartes aura*
Length:	27 inches, wingspan 67 inches
Habitat:	Open country, woodlands, farms
Identification:	Large carrion-feeder. Black-gray plumage, gray edging to wings, bare red head, yellow feet. In flight, has long wings, glides with wings held in a shallow V
Similar species:	Black Vulture has gray head, short tail, black wings tipped in white, flies in short glides with wings held flat, punctuated with several rapid flaps. Juvenile Turkey Vulture has gray head, but long tail and flight pattern are distinctive

The Turkey Vulture is much more widespread than the Black Vulture, being found as far north as southern Canada. It glides all day over open country, looking for food which it finds by scent. It often roosts in flocks, and many birds will converge to feed at a carcass. It prefers the meat to be quite ripe, which makes it easier to strip off the bones - hence its bare head, as feeding can become quite messy. It does not build a nest, but lays 1-3 red-brown blotched, whitish eggs on bare ground, or in an old building, cave or hollow log. The eggs are incubated by both parents, which takes around 40 days. The young do not leave until around 11 weeks after hatching. The plumage of the adult bird is black-gray, with a naked red face, a long tail and yellow feet. In flight, it has long gray wings with gray along the trailing edge; it glides for hours with its wings held in a shallow V - in the right conditions it rarely has to flap its wings to stay aloft. The juvenile bird has a darker head and bill and paler feet, and could be mistaken for a Black Vulture except for its long tail and different flight pattern.

Black Vulture

Scientific name: *Coragyps atratus*
Length: 25 inches, wingspan 59 inches
Habitat: Open country, urban areas
Identification: Stocky carrion-feeder. Black plumage, white patch near wing tips, large dark gray head, white feet. In flight, has broad wings, takes short glides with wings held flat, punctuated with several rapid flaps
Similar species: Turkey Vulture has red head, long tail, long black wings edged in gray, small head, soars with wings held in a shallow V

New World vultures are now considered to be related to storks, but they look like birds of prey. The Black Vulture is very common all year round in much of the south, but is rarely seen further north. It soars for hours hunting for food - often in groups - and when one bird spots carrion they all converge on it. It sometimes steals from the Turkey Vulture, which is much more efficient at scenting food. In the tropics, the Black Vulture is often seen around cities and towns, where it performs a useful function by cleaning away carrion and garbage. It does not build a nest, but lays 1-2 blotchy, whitish eggs on bare ground, or sheltered under a rock, on a ledge or in a cave. Incubation takes around 40 days but the young do not leave until 10-11 weeks later. The plumage of the adult bird is black, with a black face and dark feathered cap, a short tail and white feet. In flight, it has broad gray wings with a white patch near the wing tips; it flies in short glides with its wings held flat, punctuated with several rapid flaps.



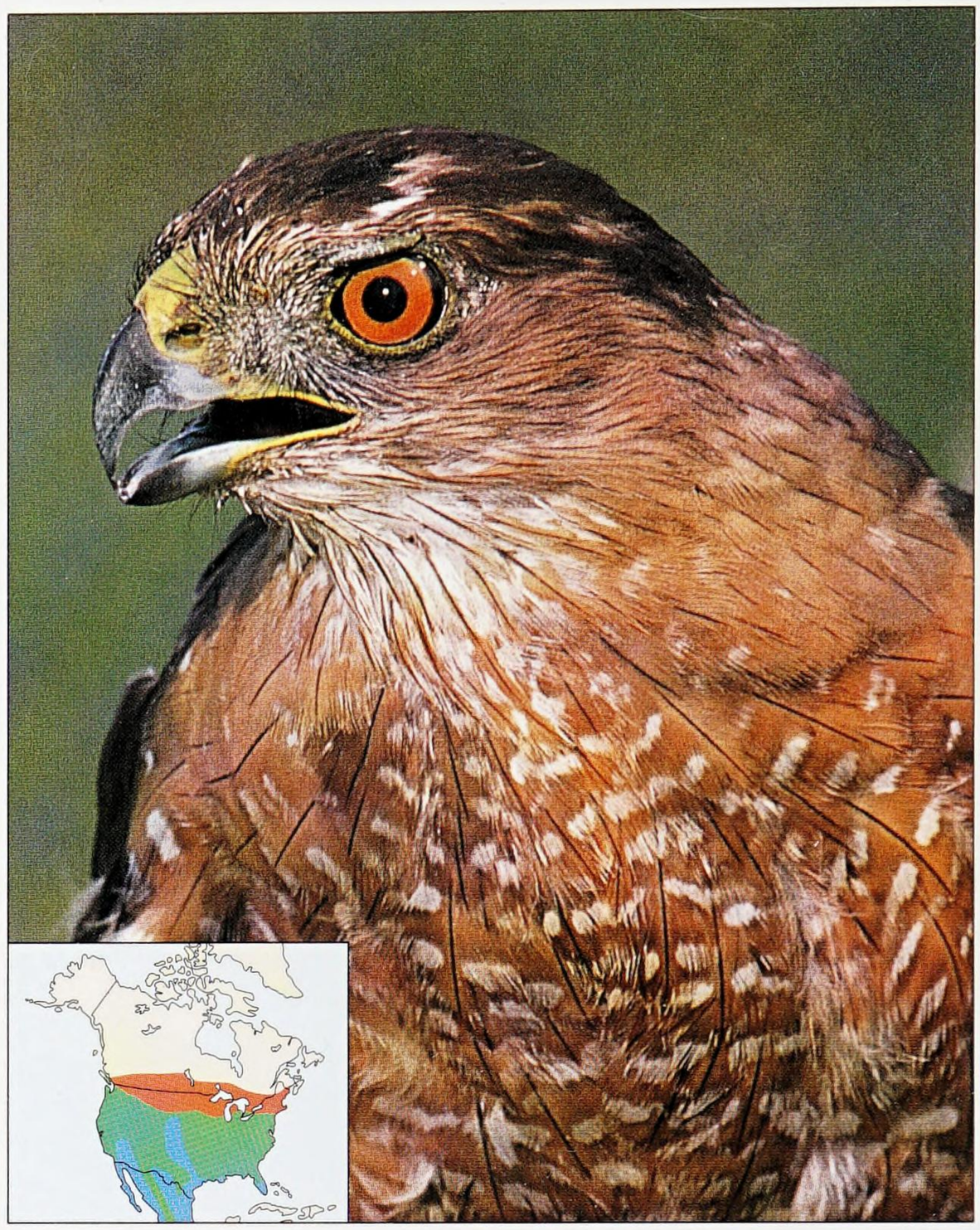
Northern Harrier

Scientific name: *Circus cyaneus*
Length: 18 inches, wingspan 44 inches
Habitat: Wetlands, marshes, open fields
Identification: Long-winged, long-tailed hawk. Male light gray above, white rump, white beneath with reddish spots; in flight black wing tips, barred tail. Female brown above, white rump, brown streaks below
Similar species: Shape and coloring make this species distinctive

A long-winged, long-tailed hawk, the Northern Harrier is common across much of North America, spending summer in the north, then migrating south in winter. It prefers wetlands and open fields, and was previously known as the Marsh Hawk. Its nest is a platform of grass and reeds on the ground in marshes, and holds 4-6 white eggs that are incubated by the female for around 32 days. The chicks stay in the nest for up to 5 weeks; during this time the male bird brings food but they are fed by the female. The Northern Harrier is a slim bird, with an owl-like face. The male is light gray above with a white rump, and white beneath with chestnut-brown spots; in flight it shows black wing tips and a barred tail. The female (*right*) is brown above with a white rump, and whitish below with heavy brown streaks. Juveniles are similar to the female, but are cinnamon-brown below. Harriers are usually seen flying low and gliding with their wings raised in a shallow V, as they hunt for small birds, rodents, frogs and reptiles. They rarely soar, except when migrating or during their acrobatic courtship display.

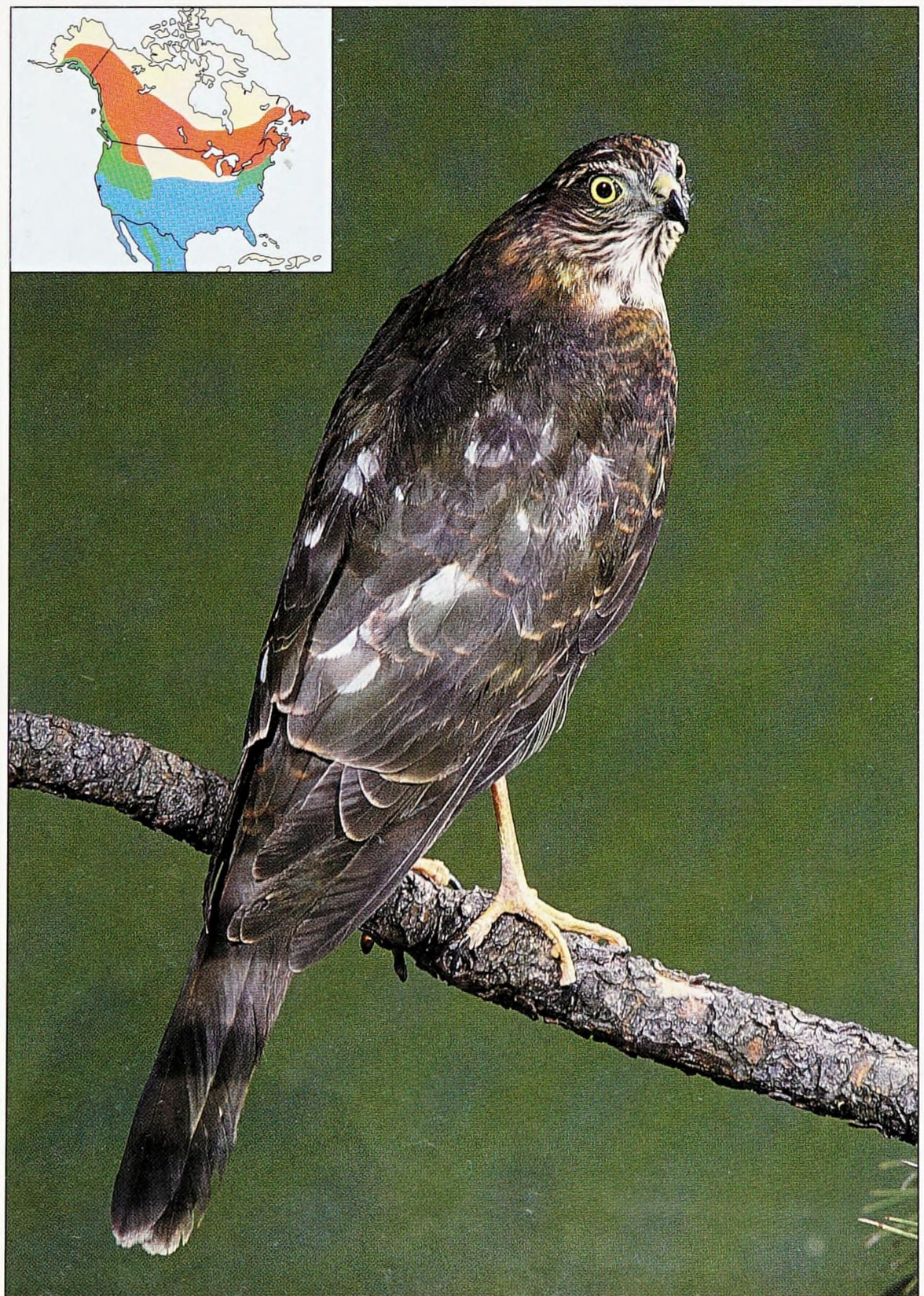


Cooper's Hawk



Scientific name:	*Accipiter cooperii*
Length:	14-20 inches, wingspan 28-34 inches
Habitat:	Broken woodlands, groves, telephone poles
Identification:	Short-winged, long-tailed hawk. Rounded, barred tail, blue-gray plumage above, white below with rusty barring. Female is similar, but larger
Similar species:	Coloring similar to Sharp-shinned Hawk, but Cooper's is larger with a longer, rounded tail and thicker legs

Cooper's Hawk is very similar in coloring to the Sharp-shinned, although is quite a bit larger. It shares much the same range, but is usually found in open woods and in streamside groves. Its nest is a platform of sticks and twigs, lined with bark, generally 10-60 feet above ground in a woodland tree. It lays 3-5 bluish-white eggs which are incubated for about 24 days, mainly by the female. The young are fed by the female, but the male hunts for food and brings it to her; the chicks leave the nest around 1 month after hatching. Cooper's Hawk has a long, rounded, barred tail, and a relatively large head. Its plumage is blue-gray above with a strongly contrasting darker cap, and white below with heavy rusty barring. The female is very similar in coloring, but is larger than the male. The juvenile is brown above, and whitish below, either streaked with brown or with reddish-brown spotting. Although it is normally spotted flying low over woods to hunt small birds and mammals, Cooper's Hawk can also be seen perching on telephone poles in open country.



Sharp-shinned Hawk

Scientific name:	*Accipiter striatus*
Length:	9-14 inches, wingspan 20-28 inches
Habitat:	Dense woodland
Identification:	Short-winged, long-tailed hawk. Square, barred tail, often notched, blue-gray plumage above, white below with rusty barring. Female is similar, but larger
Similar species:	Coloring similar to Cooper's Hawk, but Sharp-shinned is smaller with a shorter, squarer tail and thin legs

The Sharp-shinned Hawk is the smallest of the North American accipiters - a family of hawks distinguished by short, broad wings that are adapted for fast flight in wooded country. It is fairly common over much of its range, particularly in the east, and is usually found in mixed woods and forests. Its nest is a platform of sticks and twigs, generally 10-60 feet above ground in a dense conifer or other woodland tree. It lays 4-5 bluish, spotted eggs which are incubated for about 35 days by both adult birds; the young leave the nest around 2 months after they have hatched. The Sharp-shinned has a square, barred tail, which often looks notched, a relatively small head and a short neck, and very thin legs. Its plumage is blue-gray above, and white below with heavy rusty barring. The female is very similar in coloring, but is larger than the male. The juvenile is brown above, and whitish below, either streaked with brown or with reddish-brown spotting. Although it normally hunts small birds, rodents and insects in thick woodland, the Sharp-shinned Hawk will also come into the suburbs to take small birds near feeders.



Northern Goshawk

Scientific name:	*Accipiter gentilis*
Length:	18-26 inches, wingspan 38-46 inches
Habitat:	Thick coniferous and mixed forests
Identification:	Short-winged, long-tailed hawk. Wedge-shaped tail, blue-gray plumage above, white below with fine gray barring, white eyebrow below dark crown. Female is similar, but has coarser barring and is larger
Similar species:	Adults can be mistaken for Gyrfalcon, but lack yellow eye ring and have black crown, juvenile is browner and can resemble Red-shouldered Hawk

The largest of the accipiters, the Northern Goshawk is similar in coloring to both the Sharp-shinned and Cooper's hawks. It is less common than either and has a smaller range, being found in deep woodlands in northern areas and rarely venturing south. Its nest is a bulky mass of sticks and twigs, up to 60 feet above ground in a tree. It lays 2-5 pale blue eggs which are incubated for 36-38 days, by the female. The male hunts for food and brings it to the female, who feeds the young; the chicks leave the nest around 45 days after hatching. Although the typical accipiter shape, the Northern Goshawk has a shorter, wedge-shaped tail, and longer wings than the other two species. Its plumage is blue-gray above, with a bold white eyebrow contrasting against a darker cap, and white beneath with fine gray barring. The female is very similar in coloring, but has coarser barring and is larger than the male. The juvenile is brown above, and buff below, with thick black-brown streaks. The Northern Goshawk hunts birds, ducks and mammals as large as a hare, but tends to lurk in dense cover to ambush its prey.

White-tailed Kite *(below)*

Scientific name: *Elanus leucurus*
Length: 16 inches, wingspan 42 inches
Habitat: Grasslands, farmland
Identification: Medium-sized long-winged, long-tailed kite. White on head and below, dark gray back and mostly white tail, red eyes
Similar species: Mississippi Kite is very similar, but is darker gray and lacks white tail

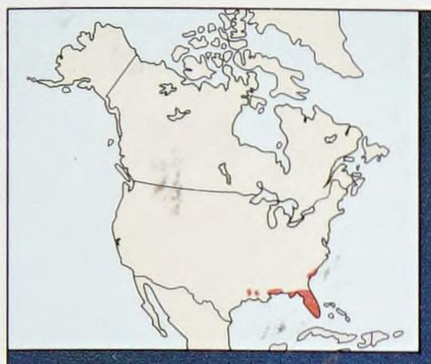
The White-tailed Kite is fairly common within its range in the far south of North America, particularly in California and Texas. Stray birds wander much farther afield, being seen as far north as British Columbia and Wyoming. It prefers grassland and farmland, but is also often seen along open highways. Unlike the Swallow-tailed and Mississippi kites, it does not migrate and may form winter roosts of several hundred birds. Its nest is of twigs lined with grass, well concealed high above the ground in a tree. The 3-5 brown-blotched white eggs are incubated for around 28 days and the young chicks stay in the nest for around 6 weeks. The adult bird has long, pointed wings and a long tail. Its plumage is mainly gray above, with black shoulders, white below, much white in the tail and large red eyes. In flight, the black of the shoulders can be seen on the leading edge of the inner wing; the remainder of the wing is gray above and gray and white below, with a distinctive black patch just behind the bend. The juvenile bird is very similar to the adult, but may be more buff on the chest and upper back. The White-tailed Kite is unusual in that it hovers on rapidly beating wings before dropping to catch its prey, unlike other North American kites. It mainly eats mice, but also takes insects and small reptiles.

Mississippi Kite

Scientific name: *Ictinia mississippiensis*
Length: 14½ inches, wingspan 35 inches
Habitat: Woodlands, swamps
Identification: Small long-winged, long-tailed kite. Pale gray head and below, dark gray back and black tail, red eyes
Similar species: White-tailed Kite is very similar, but is lighter gray and has white tail. In flight, the White-tailed Kite hovers when hunting but the Mississippi never does. Can be confused with Peregrine Falcon, but has different wing and tail shape

Unlike the White-tailed Kite, the Mississippi favors woodlands and swamps rather than open grassland. It is fairly common in the southeast, but odd birds can stray as far as the Great Lakes and California. It is mainly seen in spring and summer in North America, often hunting in flocks; in fall it migrates down to South America to spend the winter. Its nest is a large mass of twigs, from 4-100 feet above the ground in a shrub or a tall tree. The 1-3 bluish eggs are incubated for around 32 days by both birds and the young chicks stay in the nest for around 32 days after hatching. The adult birds have long, pointed wings and a long, flared tail. Their plumage is mainly dark gray above, with paler gray below and on the head, a black tail and large red eyes. In flight, whitish patches show on the upper side of the inner wing. The juvenile bird is mainly buff heavily streaked with brown, with pale whitish bars across its tail. The Mississippi Kite catches and eats its prey on the wing - it is totally at home in the air, gliding and diving gracefully like the Swallow-tailed Kite. It mainly eats insects, but will also sometimes take small snakes and frogs.





Swallow-tailed Kite

Scientific name: *Elanoides forficatus*
Length: 23 inches, wingspan 48 inches
Habitat: Open woods, wetlands
Identification: Large long-winged, long-tailed kite. White plumage with black back and deeply forked tail
Similar species: Forked tail and coloring make it almost unmistakeable in flight - juvenile Magnificent Frigatebirds are much bigger and generally have less white. Black and white coloring is much sharper than coloring of White-tailed and Mississippi kites

Athough the Swallow-tailed Kite is normally limited to Florida and surrounding areas, it does stray further on occasion and has been seen as far north as Ontario and Nova Scotia and as far west as Arizona. Once its range was much larger, but the destruction of its favored habitat by farming has led it to retreat to the swampier areas in the south. It is usually seen during the summer months, since most birds spend the winter in the South American tropics. Its 2-4 red-blotched white eggs are laid in a shallow cup of twigs, built 50-100 feet above the ground in a tree near water and several pairs may nest near each other. The eggs are incubated by both parent birds for about 28 days and the young chicks stay in the nest for around 5-6 weeks. The adult birds have long, pointed wings and a long, deeply forked tail. Their plumage is mainly white, sharply defined against the black back and tail. In flight, the wings are white on the leading edge and black behind. The juvenile bird is very similar to the adult, but may have more white on wings and tail, and the tail is much shorter. The Swallow-tailed Kite is supremely agile and graceful in flight, swooping to catch large insects on the wing and dropping to pick up small snakes, frogs and lizards. It often eats its prey while still flying, and drinks by skimming the surface of the water.

Red-tailed Hawk

Scientific name: *Buteo jamaicensis*
Length: 22 inches, wingspan 50 inches
Habitat: Woods, plains, prairie
Identification: Large broad-winged, short-tailed hawk. Usually dark brown back with pale mottling, white underneath with belly band of dark streaks, but color varies according to range. Most adults have reddish tail above, whitish beneath, heavy bill
Similar species: Swainson's Hawk has no pale mottling on back and a smaller bill. Rough-legged Hawk has long white tail



One of the most common American hawks, the Red-tailed is seen across much of North America and in summer up into Canada. It can be spotted soaring over open country, particularly if there are nearby woods offering seclusion for nesting. It builds a large and solid nest, up to 75 feet above ground in a tree or on a cliff, with a small cup in the center lined with fine green shoots. This contains 1-4 whitish eggs, which are incubated for 27-33 days; the chicks stay in the nest for up to 5 weeks after hatching. The coloring of the adult bird varies according to its range, but the differences are not substantial. It usually has a dark brown back with V-shaped lines of pale mottling, and is white underneath with distinctive belly band of dark streaks. The bill is quite heavy and the tail is reddish above and whitish beneath. A variety known as "Harlan's Hawk" is much darker on the body and has a whitish tail with dark marbling. Juvenile birds have a gray-brown tail with dark bars. The Red-tailed Hawk sits for hours on a telegraph pole or fence post, before gliding off to catch its prey; it mainly eats rodents, which makes it very popular with farmers.

Ferruginous Hawk

Scientific name: *Buteo regalis*
Length: 23 inches, wingspan 53 inches
Habitat: Dry open country, grasslands
Identification: Large hawk with broad, pointed wings. Rusty-brown back and leg feathers, whitish underneath, whitish tail with rusty-brown tip. Also dark version, with dark red-brown plumage, whitish under tail and on trailing edge of wings
Similar species: Dark version can be confused with dark Rough-legged Hawk, but has no dark tail band



The Ferruginous Hawk is the largest of the buteo family and is usually seen across western grasslands and dry open country. It perches in trees, on poles or on the ground in open fields. Its nest is built of sticks, roots, twigs and even old cattle bones, usually at the top of a tree, but failing that on a cliff ledge, bush or hillside. It often returns to the same nest year after year, adding to the construction until it is many feet high. The nest usually contains 3-5 blotched or spotted eggs, which are incubated for around 29 days by both birds; the chicks stay in the nest for up to 7 weeks after hatching. The Ferruginous has a wide head, broad wings tapering towards the ends and feathered legs. It has a pale head, rusty-brown back, shoulders and leg feathers, whitish underneath, and a whitish tail with a rusty-brown tip. In flight, wings are held in a shallow V when soaring and it shows a white crescent-shaped patch on the upper wing. The darker version is quite rare; it has dark red-brown plumage, and is whitish under the tail and on trailing edge of the wings. The juvenile bird is much less rusty-colored and its leg feathers are whitish. The Ferruginous Hawk hovers when hunting; it mainly eats rodents, rabbits and hares.

Rough-legged Hawk

Scientific name: *Buteo lagopus*
Length: 22 inches, wingspan 56 inches
Habitat: Open country, marshes
Identification: Large hawk, long white tail with dark tail bands. Pale head, chest and leg feathers with dark streaks, brown back, whitish underneath with dark belly band. Also dark version, with dark brown plumage, whitish under tail with dark bands, white tipped with black on trailing edge of wings
Similar species: Dark version can be confused with dark Ferruginous Hawk, but has dark tail bands

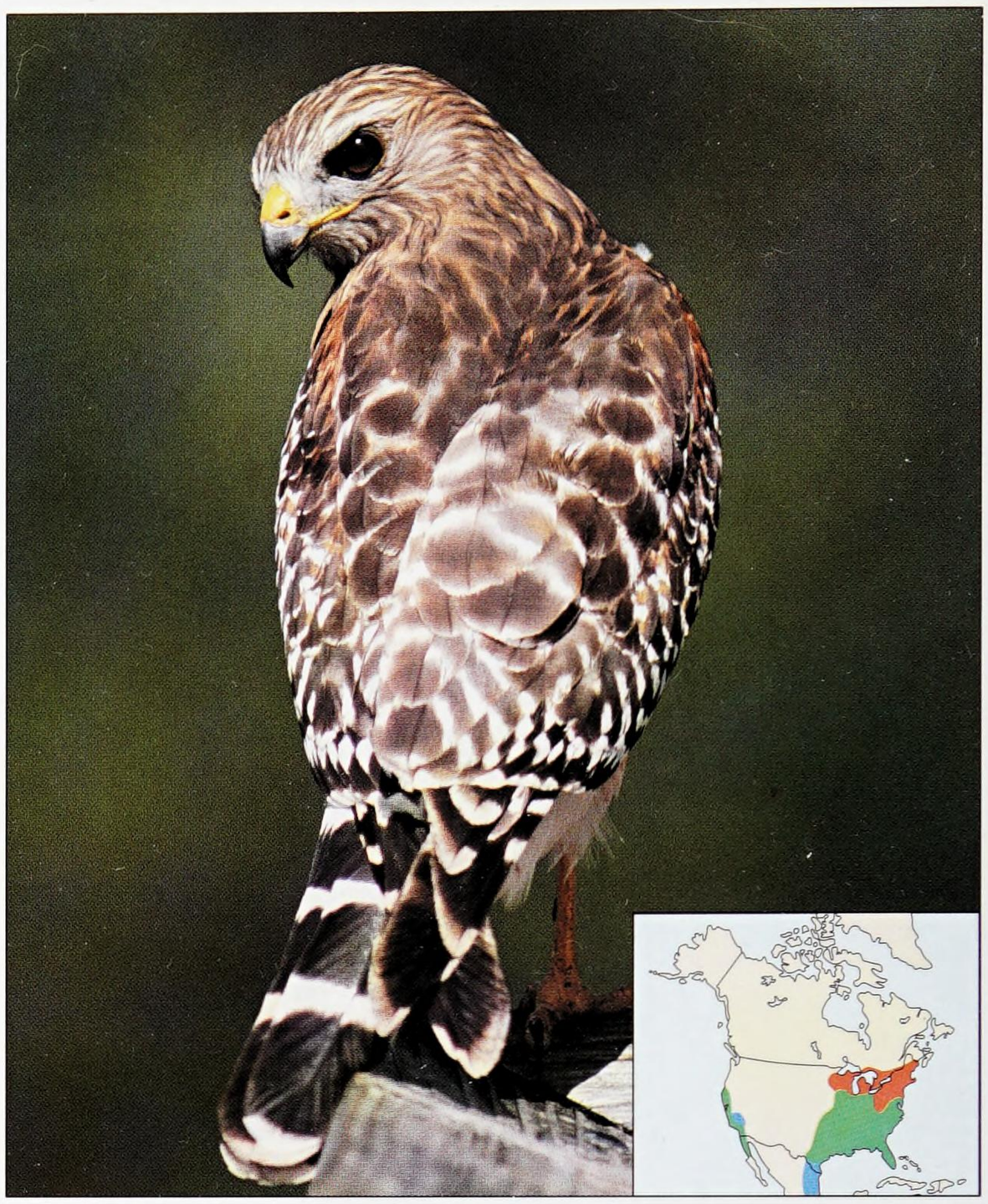
A bird that prefers the cold, the Rough-legged Hawk spends the summer in the Arctic, moving south to the farmland and prairies of central North America in the winter. It breeds on tundra, building a nest of twigs and moss on a cliff ledge. It lays 2-6 greenish, brown-blotched eggs, which are incubated for around 29 days; the chicks stay in the nest for up to 6 weeks after hatching. The plumage of the adult bird can be quite variable, but it generally has a pale head, chest and leg feathers with dark streaks, a brown back, is whitish underneath with darker belly band, and has a long white tail with dark tail bands. In flight, it shows a square black patch on the underside of the wing and a white patch on the upper side. The darker version is very rare; it has dark brown plumage, the tail is whitish underneath with dark bands, and the underside of the wings is white tipped with black on the trailing edge. The juvenile bird has a stronger dark belly band and a single dark-brown tail band. The Rough-legged Hawk hovers on rapidly beating wings when hunting; it eats lemmings and ptarmigans in the Arctic and rodents and small birds further south.



Red-shouldered Hawk

Scientific name:	*Buteo lineatus*
Length:	17 inches, wingspan 40 inches
Habitat:	Mixed woodland near water
Identification:	Small, long-tailed, long-legged woodland hawk. Rusty-red shoulder patch, body and underwing, black and white bands on tail and wings
Similar species:	Juvenile can be confused with juvenile Broad-winged Hawk, but is larger

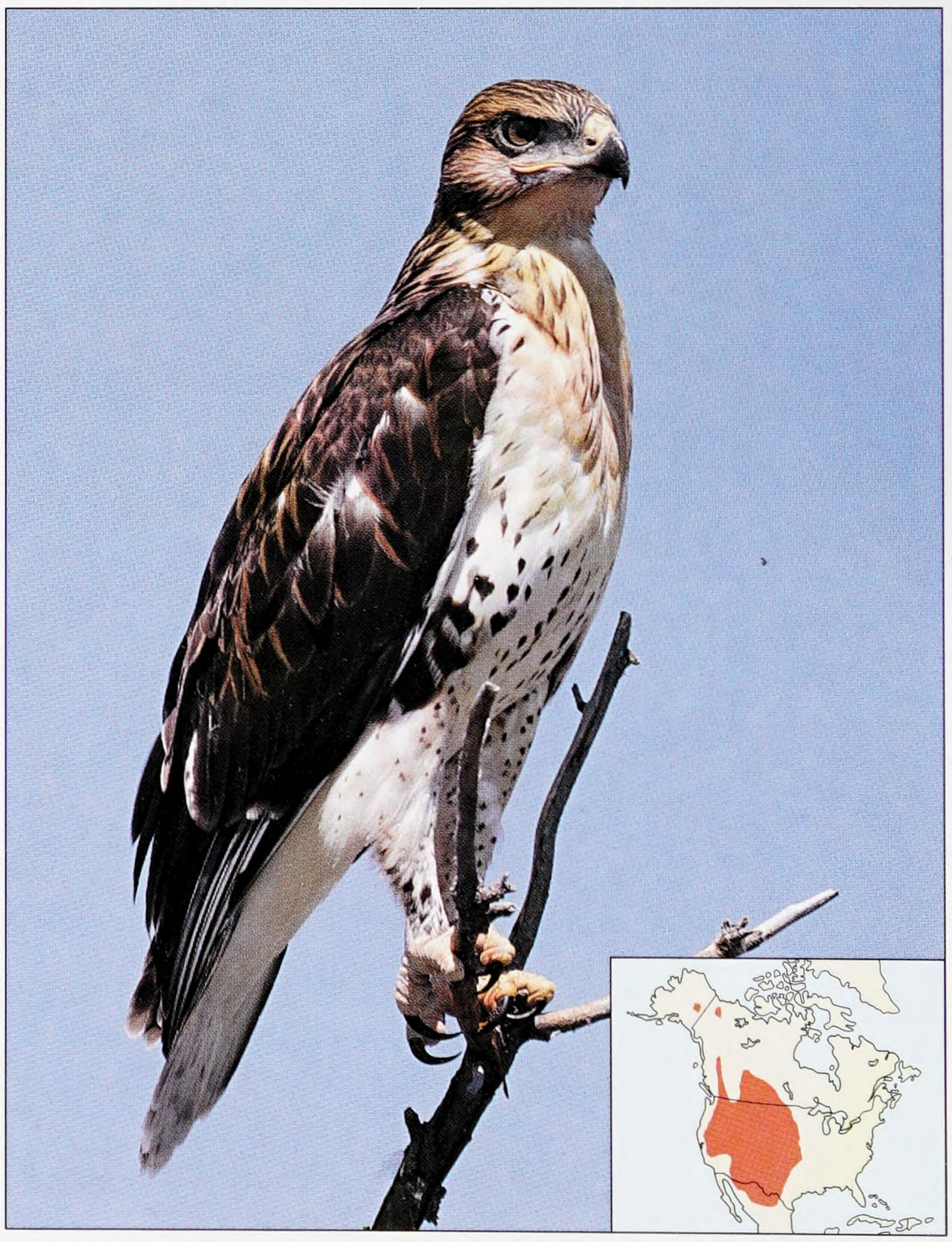
A forest bird, the Red-shouldered Hawk is fairly common in Florida and California, and is often seen in the southeast although it is rare elsewhere. Its nest is a large, flat construction of twigs and sticks, built high up in a tall woodland tree near moving water. It comes back to the same nest year after year, freshly decorating the construction with green sprigs after moving back in. It lays 2-5 whitish eggs, which are incubated for around 28 days by both parents; the chicks stay in the nest for 5-6 weeks after hatching. The adult has long wings and tail. Its plumage is quite variable depending on its range, but it generally has a rusty-red shoulder patch, body and underwing, and extensive whitish spotting on the back. In flight, it shows black and white bands on tail and wings and a translucent area near the wing tip. West coast birds tend to be redder, while east coast birds are paler. The juvenile bird is browner with less apparent red. The Red-shouldered Hawk flies with several quick wingbeats followed by a glide and defends its territory at nesting time by soaring in spectacular displays. It eats reptiles, small birds and mammals, frogs and crayfish.



Swainson's Hawk

Scientific name:	*Buteo swainsoni*
Length:	21 inches, wingspan 52 inches
Habitat:	Open plains, prairie
Identification:	Slim hawk with long, narrow, pointed wings. Usually dark brown back, white underneath, dark chest, but color varies. Most adults have white wing lining and dark flight feathers, small head and bill
Similar species:	Red-tailed Hawk has pale mottling on back and a heavier bill. Rough-legged Hawk has long white tail

Swainson's Hawk is only seen in North America in the summer, with most birds migrating to South America for the winter. It can be spotted over western grassland and farmland, or migrating south in large flocks. Its nest is of sticks, built on bare ground, in a tree, bush or cactus, or on a cliff ledge; it is often renovated and reused each year. It contains 2-4 bluish or white eggs, which are incubated for around 28 days by both parent birds; the chicks stay in the nest for up to 4 weeks after hatching. The adult bird is slim-bodied, with a small head and bill, long, narrow, pointed wings and a relatively long tail, but its coloring varies considerably. It typically has a dark brown back, and is white underneath with a darker chest. In flight, white wing linings contrast with dark flight feathers; when soaring the wings are held slightly above horizontal. The wings extend past the tip of the tail when the bird is perched. Darker versions can be uniformly dark brown, some are rusty-red beneath or have strong barring. Juvenile birds have variable streaking and strong markings on the face. Groups of Swainson's Hawk often follow tractors on the ground during harvesting, picking up the rodents and large insects that otherwise would eat the crop - which makes it very popular with farmers.

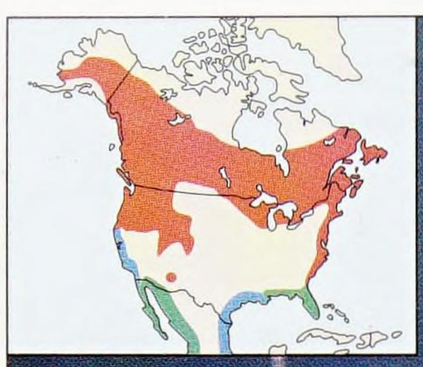




Broad-winged Hawk

Scientific name:	*Buteo platypterus*
Length:	16 inches, wingspan 34 inches
Habitat:	Woodland
Identification:	Small short-tailed hawk with broad, pointed wings. Dark back, reddish chest, white streaked with red-brown below, broad black and white bands on tail, white underwings with dark borders
Similar species:	Juvenile can be confused with juvenile Red-shouldered Hawk, but has a plainer breast and less marking on the back

Another woodland species, the Broad-winged Hawk is seen only during the summer in the eastern half of North America, with most birds migrating to South America early in the fall. It is a social bird, often seen in large flocks. Its nest is a mass of twigs and sticks, built up to 50 feet above the ground in a tall woodland tree. It lays 2-3 brown-and-purple-splashed white eggs, which are incubated for around 28 days by both parents; the chicks stay in the nest for 5-6 weeks after hatching. The adult has broad, pointed wings and a rather short, broad tail. Its plumage is plainer than some other hawks, with a dark back, reddish chest, white barred with red-brown below, and broad black and white bands on the tail. In flight, it shows white underwings with dark borders. The juvenile bird typically has a black streak below the cheeks and less distinct tail bands. The Broad-winged Hawk flies with slower wing beats than many other hawks, soaring with wings held flat. It migrates in very large flocks - often consisting of thousands of birds. When hunting, it sits on a favorite perch near water, watching and waiting, until it suddenly moves swiftly to catch a frog, snake or crayfish.



Zone-tailed Hawk

Scientific name:	*Buteo albonotatus*
Length:	20 inches, wingspan 51 inches
Habitat:	Mountains, woodlands, rivers
Identification:	High-soaring hawk. Gray-black plumage, large feathered head, white bands on tail, yellow legs, feet and base of bill. In flight, has barring under wings, soars with wings held in a shallow V
Similar species:	Turkey Vulture is almost identical in flight, but has no white tail bands and a naked red face

Although rather uncommon, the Zone-tailed Hawk spends the summer in the southeast and can be found in wooded canyons, desert mountain country and near forest watercourses. In flight, it closely resembles the Turkey Vulture, which is much more widespread and common. Its nest is a platform of sticks and green branches in a tall tree or on a cliff - often enlarged and used year after year - which holds 2-3 blotched white eggs. The adult bird has a large feathered head, a small bill and quite slim wings. Its plumage is gray-black overall, with white bands on the tail, and yellow legs, feet and base of bill. In flight, it shows barring under the wings, and soars high up with wings held in a shallow V. The juvenile bird often has less obvious tail bands and may have white spots or flecks on its black breast. When hunting, the Zone-tailed Hawk glides slowly and drops to catch small birds, rodents, lizards and fish. Some believe that its resemblance to the Turkey Vulture allows it to approach its prey much closer, since other birds and animals do not fear a carrion-eater.

Osprey *(above)*

Scientific name:	*Pandion haliaetus*
Length:	23 inches, wingspan 63 inches
Habitat:	Coastal areas
Identification:	Large hawk. Long narrow wings, plumage dark brown above, white below, white head with dark eye stripe
Similar species:	Flying birds may be confused with gulls, but shape and coloring are distinctive

Sometimes known as the "fish hawk" or "fish eagle", the Osprey is fairly common in coastal areas and is sometimes seen along rivers and over inland lakes. It was once threatened by the use of DDT, but since this and other pesticides have been banned, populations have recovered. Its nest is a large construction of sticks in a tall tree, rock pinnacle or any tall structure near water, and is reused year after year. It holds 2-4 buffy eggs, blotched with brown, which are usually incubated by the female for around a month. The young are downy white, and leave the nest around 2 months after hatching. The adult bird has long narrow wings, held above horizontal and slightly arched in flight, with a distinct bend at the wrist. Its plumage is dark brown above and white below, with a white head and a dark eye stripe. The female bird may have some darker streaking on the neck. The juvenile is similar coloring but has white scaling on its back. Unlike other hawks, the Osprey feeds almost exclusively on fish, which it catches by soaring over the water and diving, talons first.



HARRIS'S HAWK *(above)*

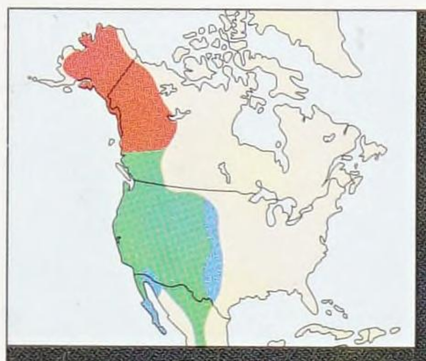
Scientific name:	*Parabuteo unicinctus*
Length:	21 inches, wingspan 46 inches
Habitat:	Desert, arid woodland, brushland
Identification:	Medium-size, slim hawk. Black-brown plumage, rust-red shoulders, thighs and wing linings, black tail with white base and tip
Similar species:	No other hawk has the same coloring

Harris's Hawk is a very striking bird, which is seen all year round in America in the desert and brush of southern Texas and Arizona - although its full range extends down through Mexico and into South America. It is often seen in family groups after the breeding season has finished and several birds will hunt in small cooperative flocks during the winter. Its nest is a small platform of sticks and twigs in a low desert tree, or in a yucca or saguaro cactus, which holds 3-5 whitish eggs. Incubation takes around 34 days, by the female bird, but during this time and after the chicks have hatched the male bird keeps the whole family supplied with food - sometimes helped by a second male. The adult bird has mainly dark chocolate black-brown plumage, with rust-red shoulders, thighs and wing linings, and a black tail with white base and tip. Both adults have the same coloring, but the male bird is smaller than the female. The juvenile bird is heavily streaked brown beneath, with much less distinct shoulder patches and narrow tail bands. Harris's Hawk mainly eats small mammals, but will also take birds and reptiles.

Golden Eagle

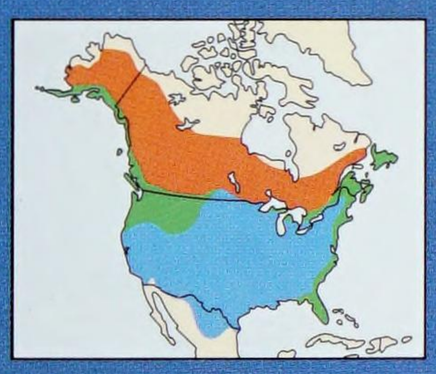
Scientific name:	*Aquila chrysaetos*
Length:	30 inches, wingspan 80 inches
Habitat:	Mountains, plains, open country
Identification:	Large bird of prey. Dark brown plumage overall, with golden nape
Similar species:	Adult is unmistakable, juvenile may be mistaken for juvenile Bald Eagle but has smaller head, longer tail and defined white markings under wings and on tail

The majestic Golden Eagle is a solitary bird, sometimes seen in pairs but rarely gathering in groups. It prefers wilderness areas away from humans and is fairly numerous in the west but not so often seen in the east. Its eyrie is a large mass of sticks in a tall tree or on a cliff, and a pair may alternate between several sites in different years. The 2 whitish, brown-blotched eggs are incubated by both parents for up to 44 days, and the chicks leave the nest around 10 weeks after hatching. The adult bird has dark brown plumage overall, with a golden nape, feathered legs and faint bands on the tail. Juveniles are dark brown but have a clearly-defined white wing patch and white tail with a black band at the tip; it takes four years for them to reach full adult plumage. The Golden Eagle soars with long, broad wings held flat or slightly uplifted. Despite rumors of them taking lambs, they rarely do; they normally feed on small mammals such as rabbits, birds, snakes and carrion - although they are quite capable of taking animals the size of a deer.









Bald Eagle

Scientific name:	*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*
Length:	31 inches, wingspan 80 inches
Habitat:	Rivers, lakes, coastal areas
Identification:	Large bird of prey. White head, neck and tail, brown-black body, yellow bill
Similar species:	Adult is unmistakable, juvenile may be mistaken for juvenile Golden Eagle but has larger head, shorter tail and blotchy, less defined patterning under wings and on tail

The magnificent Bald Eagle has been the national symbol of the United States since 1782. It is seen across much of North America - particularly near water - but is common in Alaska, parts of Florida and during the winter in the midwest. It was endangered in the 1970s, but conservation programs and the banning of pesticides have led to a gradual comeback in many areas. Its eyrie is a large pile of sticks up to 150 feet above the ground, usually in a tall tree near water, and it is renovated and added to every year - increasing in size until either its own weight or a winter storm brings it down. The 1-3 dull, whitish eggs are incubated by both parents for up to 35 days, and the chicks leave the nest around 10 weeks after they have hatched. The adult bird has a pure white head, neck and tail, a brown-black body, and a large yellow bill. Juveniles are mostly dark brown, except for blotchy white underneath and on the wing linings, but achieve a little more white at each molt, taking four to five years to reach the full adult plumage. Although it is a very skilled hunter, the Bald Eagle often eats carrion or will steal fish from the smaller and weaker Osprey. Large numbers of Bald Eagles will often congregate where pickings are easy - particularly at spawning runs.



Crested Caracara

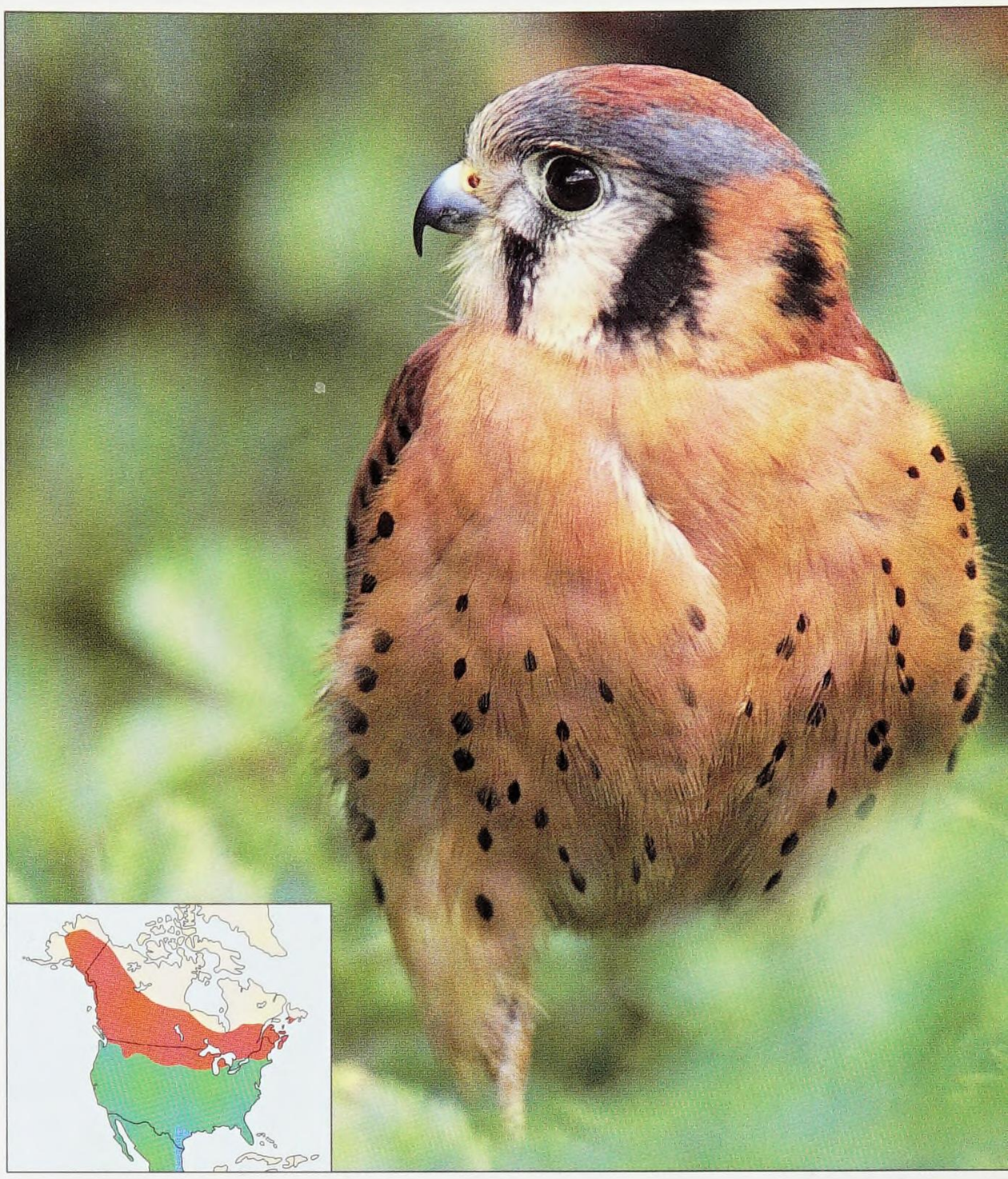
Scientific name:	*Caracara plancus*
Length:	23 inches, wingspan 50 inches
Habitat:	Open savannah, desert
Identification:	Tropical long-necked, long-legged falcon. Black-brown body and crested cap, whitish throat and chest, bare red-orange facial skin, barred underparts, white tail and wing patch with black near tip
Similar species:	Coloring and shape make it unmistakable

Called the "Mexican Eagle" and appearing on the flag of Mexico, the Crested Caracara is a tropical bird that only comes as far north as Texas, parts of Florida and occasionally Louisiana and southern Arizona - although escaped cage birds are sometimes seen in other areas. Its nest is a bulky affair of sticks, built far off the ground in a tree, palmetto or cactus. It holds 2-4 pinky-brown eggs with darker blotches, which are incubated for around 28 days. The adult bird has a large head, long neck, and long legs. Its plumage is mainly black-brown, with a black crested cap, bare red-orange facial skin, a white throat and chest, barred underparts and white tail and wing patches tipped in dark brown. The juvenile has paler facial skin, is much browner overall and has whitish spots and streaks on the wings. The Caracara soars with flat wings and hunts insects and small animals, although it chiefly feeds on carrion and is often seen on the ground with vultures.

American Kestrel

Scientific name: *Falco sparverius*
Length: 10½ inches, wingspan 23 inches
Habitat: Open country, deserts, urban areas
Identification: Small long-tailed falcon. Russet crown, back and tail, double black stripes on white face, hooked bill. Male has blue-gray wings, buff breast and white underparts with dark spots
Similar species: Male is similar to male Merlin, but russet back and tail are distinctive

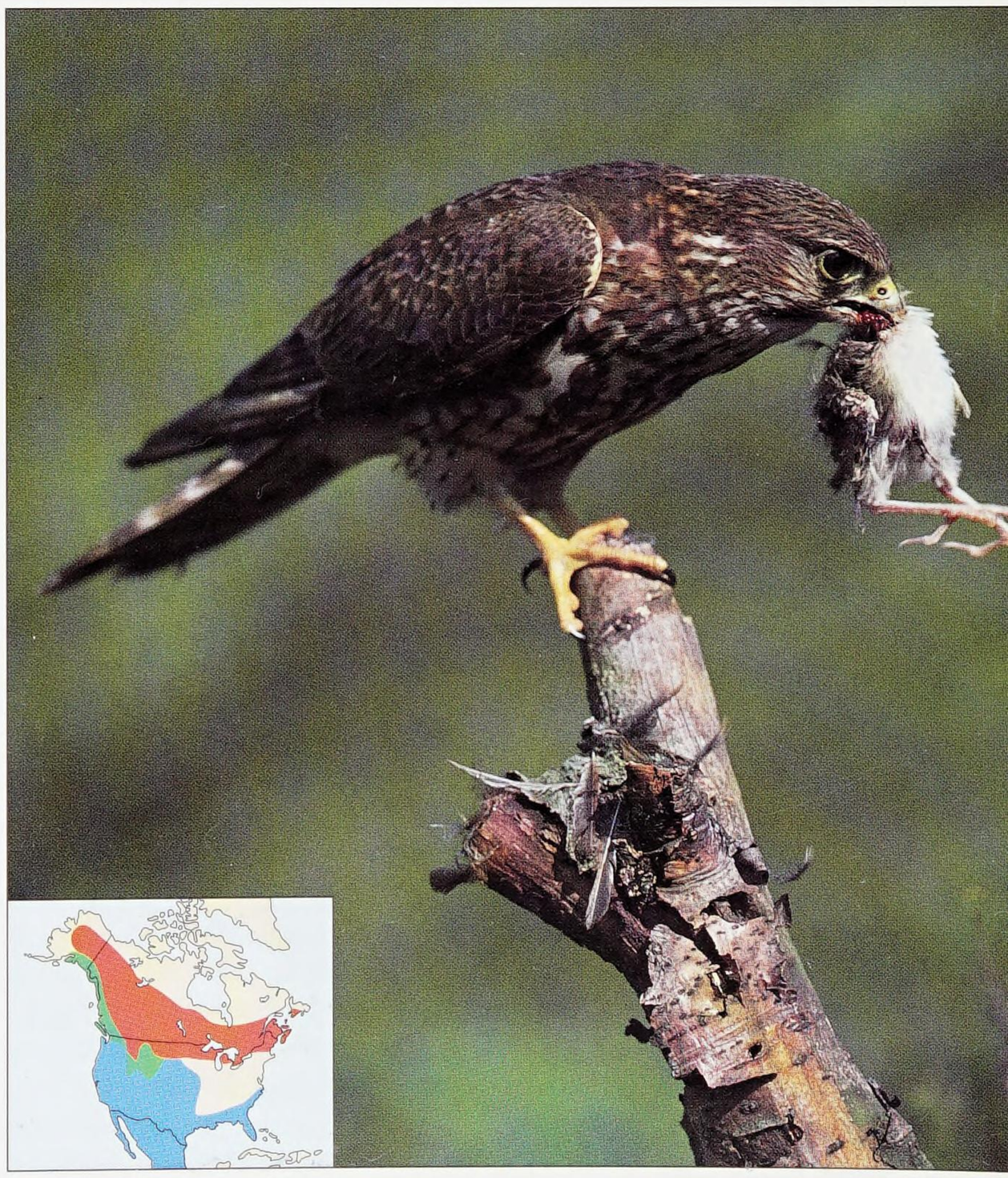
The smallest and most common American falcon, the American Kestrel is found in open country and in cities across the country - although birds in the far north migrate south for the winter. It was formerly known as the "Sparrow Hawk". It does not build a nest, but lays 3-6 buffy-pink to grayish-white eggs in a tree hole, crevice of a building or an old magpie nest. The eggs are incubated for around 30 days, mainly by the female although the male may also help, and the chicks are ready to leave the nest around one month after hatching. About the size of a jay, the American Kestrel has a hooked bill, a russet crown, back and tail, and double black stripes on a white face. The male has blue-gray wings and on its head, a buff breast and nape and white underparts with dark spots. In flight, both adult birds have pale underwings and the male has a row of circular white spots on the trailing edge of its wings. When hunting, the Kestrel either hovers over the ground or sits on a convenient tree or telephone wire, plunging to catch mice, insects and, in winter, small birds.



Merlin

Scientific name: *Falco columbarius*
Length: 12 inches, wingspan 25 inches
Habitat: Open woods, wooded prairie, towns
Identification: Small compact falcon. Male blue-gray above, buff with light brown streaks below, black tail bands. Female and juvenile brown above with buff tail bands
Similar species: Male similar to male American Kestrel, but lacks russet back and tail and has broader wings. Peregrine and Prairie falcons are much larger and lack tail bands

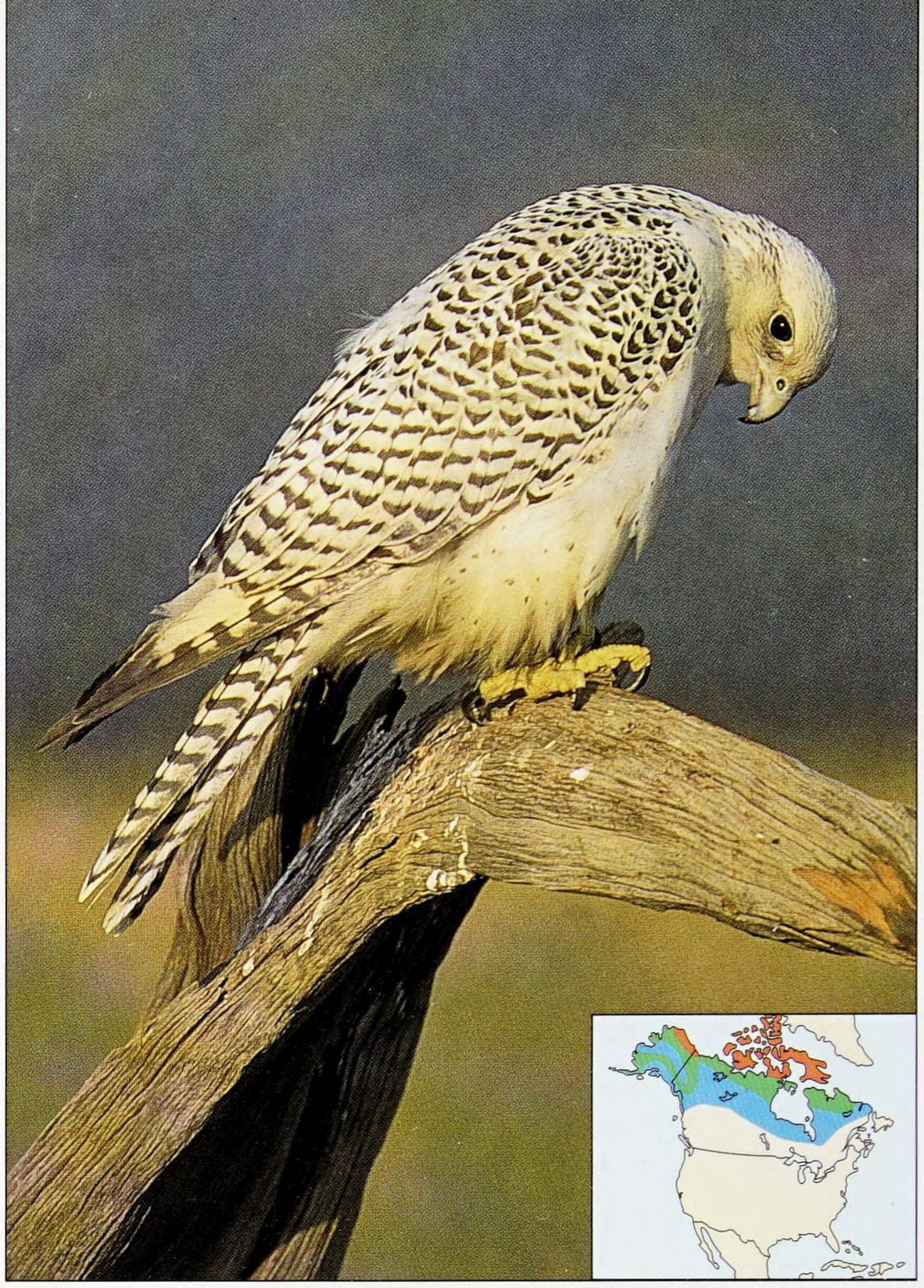
A small, stocky falcon, the Merlin is found in open country across North America, spending summer in the north and migrating south in the winter - although some birds in central areas stay all year round. The Merlin does not build a nest, but lays 3-6 rust-colored, dark spotted eggs in a tree hole, on the ground or in another bird's abandoned nest. The eggs are incubated for around 30 days, by both female and male, and the chicks are ready to leave the nest just under a month after hatching. The male generally has blue-gray plumage above, buff with light brown streaks below, and strong black tail bands. The female (*right*) and juvenile birds are dark brown above with buff tail bands. Adult birds have yellow skin at the base of the bill and round the eyes, juvenile has blue. There are regional variations, ranging from very dark birds in the northwest to pale birds in the north. When hunting, the Merlin does not hover but flies low with a steady wingbeat and catches small birds in midair with a sudden burst of speed. It also eats large insects and small rodents.



Gyrfalcon

Scientific name: *Falco rusticolus*
Length: 22 inches, wingspan 47 inches
Habitat: Tundra near rocky outcrops, river cliffs
Identification: Large broad-winged long-tailed falcon. Plumage varies, but adult generally dark gray above, lighter gray beneath, with yellow-orange eye ring and base of bill
Similar species: Can be confused with Prairie Falcon, but lacks black wing patches, also with the Peregrine Falcon but lacks black helmet. Similar to Northern Goshawk in some color variations, but lacks white flaring eyebrow

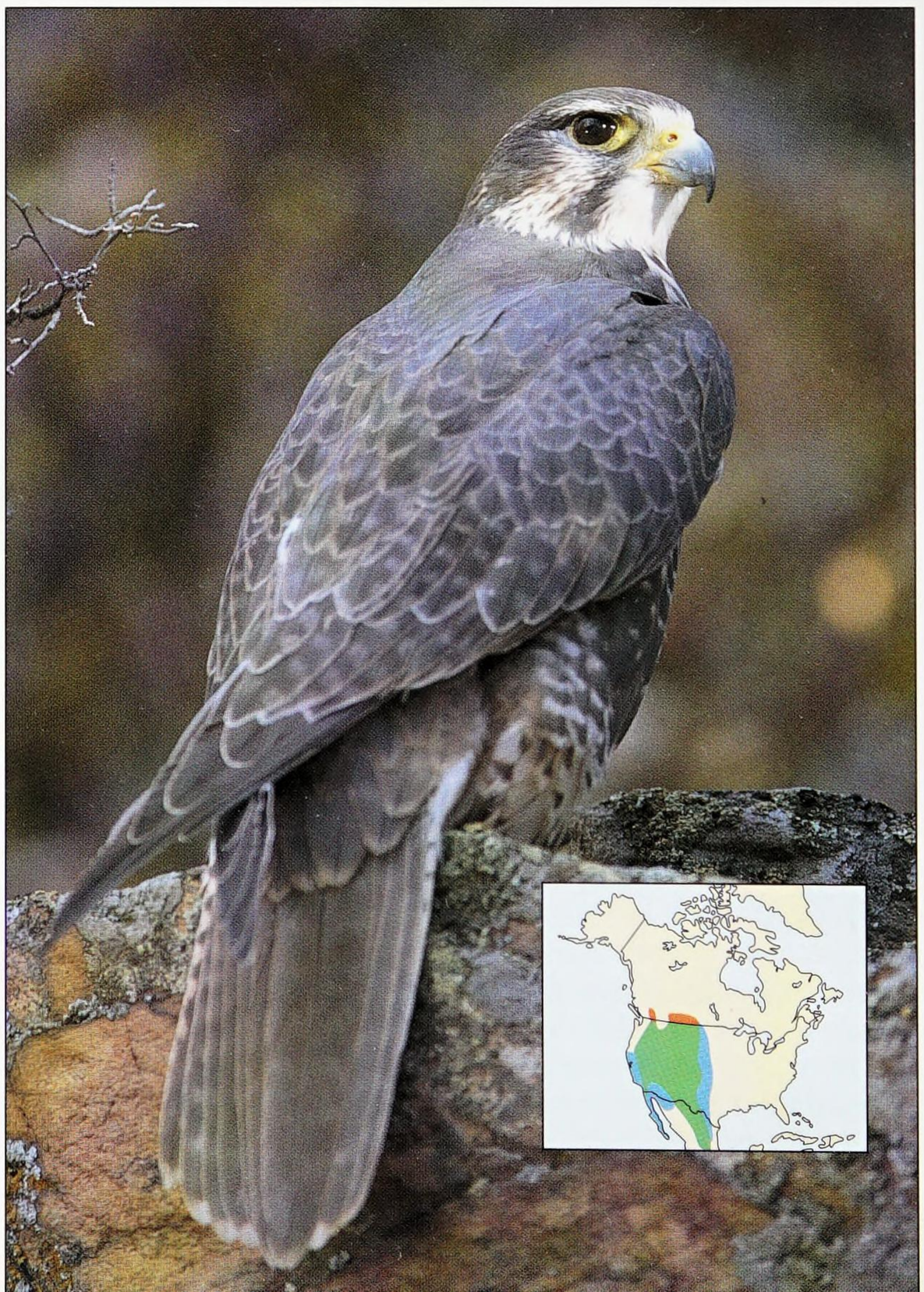
The largest of the falcons, the Gyrfalcon was prized by medieval falconers and was reserved for royalty. It is found in the far north, breeding on cliffs along Arctic rivers and only seen further south in winter, along the coast or in open country. Like many other falcons, the Gyrfalcon does not usually build a nest, but lays 3-8 creamy, red-spotted eggs in a scrape on a cliff ledge, or in the abandoned nest of another bird. The eggs are incubated for around a month, mainly by the female bird, and the chicks first fly around 7 weeks after hatching. The adult bird is stocky and powerful, with broad wings and a relatively long, tapered tail that extends far beyond the tip of its wings when it is perched. It has a yellow-orange eye ring, base to the bill and legs; its plumage is generally dark gray above, lighter gray beneath, sometimes with darker barring. There are variations, ranging from very dark birds to almost white. The juvenile is very similar to the adult, but has bluish-gray legs. When hunting, the Gyrfalcon flies fast but with slow wingbeats and catches birds, especially ptarmigan, and small mammals.



Prairie Falcon

Scientific name: *Falco mexicanus*
Length: 17½ inches, wingspan 40 inches
Habitat: Dry grassland, desert, prairie
Identification: Large long-tailed falcon. Adult sandy-brown above with pale barring, white patch behind eye, creamy below with darker spotting. In flight shows long dark patch under wing
Similar species: Peregrine Falcon can be similar coloring but has distinctive black helmet. Also resembles female and juvenile Merlin, but is larger and lacks strongly marked tail bands

A similar size and shape to the Peregrine Falcon, the Prairie Falcon is much more common and is found over grassland and dry country in the west of America throughout the year. It rarely builds its own nest, laying 3-6 reddish, dark-spotted eggs on a ledge or in the old nest of another bird. The eggs are incubated for around a month and the chicks fly about 6 weeks after hatching. The adult bird is slim and powerful, with quite a long tail; it extends well past the tip of its wings when the bird is perched. The adult is sandy-brown above with pale barring, has a white patch behind the eye, and is creamy below with fine spots. The juvenile is darker, with less contrast, and has heavier streaking underneath. In flight, all birds show a distinctive long dark patch under the wings. When hunting, the Prairie Falcon does not dive from the sky but pursues its prey flying fast and low over the ground, twisting and turning and outmaneuvering ground squirrels, birds and rodents.





Peregrine Falcon

Scientific name:	*Falco peregrinus*
Length:	17 inches, wingspan 41 inches
Habitat:	Open wetlands, cliffs, cities
Identification:	Large short-tailed falcon. Male slate-gray above, black on head like helmet, whitish neck, buff beneath, lightly barred breast. Female browner, juvenile dark buff with heavy streaking underneath
Similar species:	Prairie Falcon and smaller Merlin can be similar coloring but lack the distinctive black helmet

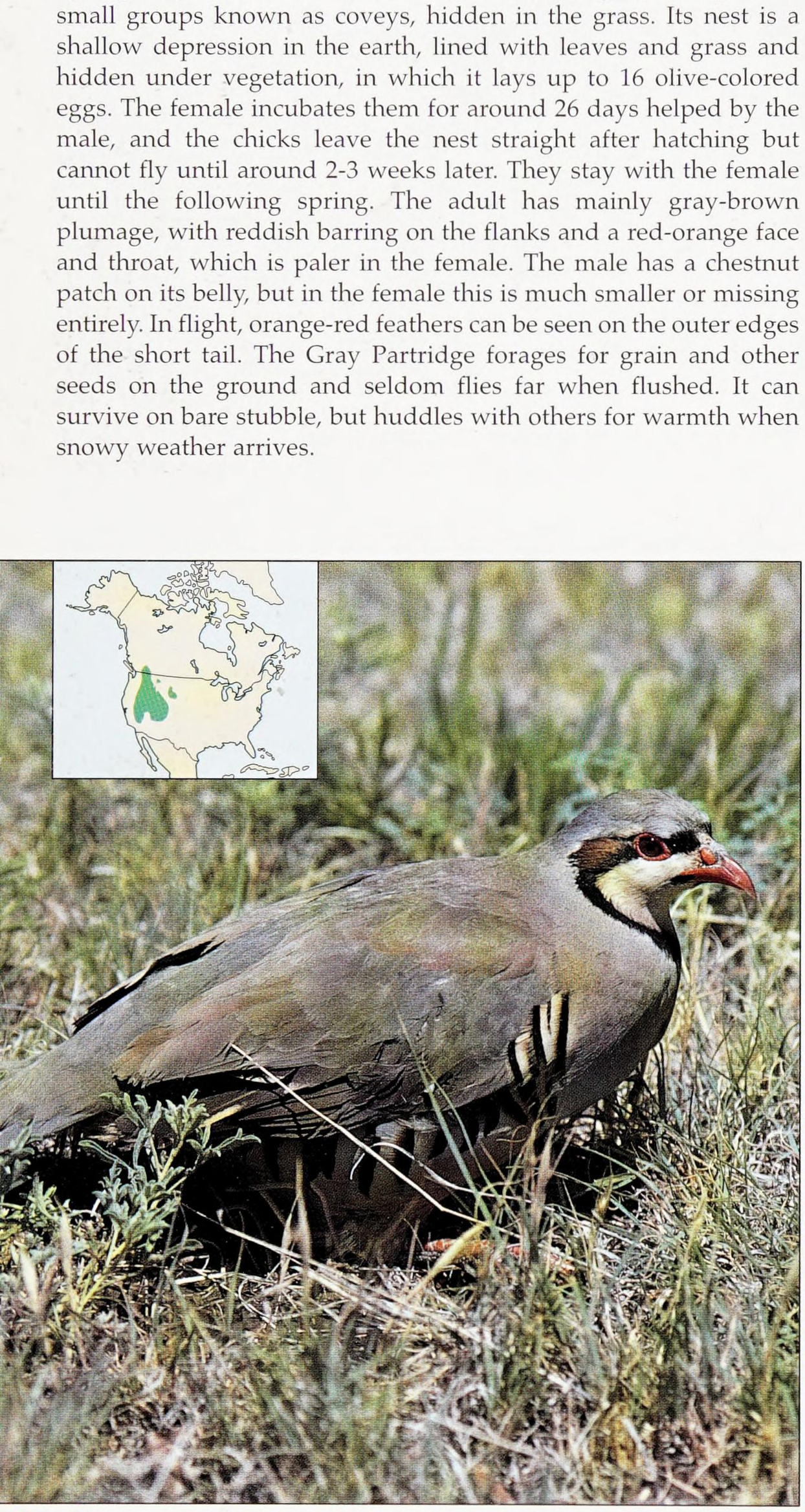
The Peregrine Falcon was once found across North America, but DDT and other pesticides helped eliminate the eastern population and brought it close to extinction. The banning of such pesticides has led to a slow recovery and captive-breeding programs have reintroduced birds to some areas. The Peregrine does not build a nest, but lays 2-4 reddish, darker flecked eggs in a hollow on a cliff, bare rocky outcrop or on the ledges of tall city buildings. The eggs are incubated for around 28 days, by both female and male, and the chicks are ready to leave 5-6 weeks after hatching. The adult bird is sleek and powerful, with pointed wings and a short tail; the tip of its wings almost reach the end of the tail when it is perched. The male is slate-gray above, with a black crown and nape that extends forward on the head like a helmet, a whitish neck, and is buff beneath with a lightly barred breast. The female is browner and the juvenile dark buff with heavy streaking underneath. There are regional variations, ranging from very dark birds in the northwest to pale birds in the north. When hunting, the Peregrine Falcon flies very fast and makes dramatic swoops to catch small birds in midair, so it is sought after by falconers in the northern continents. It also eats large insects and small mammals.

Gray Partridge

Scientific name:	*Perdix perdix*
Length:	12½ inches
Habitat:	Open farmland, grassy fields
Identification:	Ground-dwelling bird. Gray-brown plumage with reddish barring on flanks, red-orange face and throat. Male has chestnut patch on belly
Similar species:	Similar size and shape to Chukar, but different coloring

Brought from the Old World in the 19th century and released in America as a game bird, the Gray Partridge has spread across central North America and is very common in some areas. It prefers open grassy fields, where it tends to walk on the ground in pairs or small groups known as coveys, hidden in the grass. Its nest is a shallow depression in the earth, lined with leaves and grass and hidden under vegetation, in which it lays up to 16 olive-colored eggs. The female incubates them for around 26 days helped by the male, and the chicks leave the nest straight after hatching but cannot fly until around 2-3 weeks later. They stay with the female until the following spring. The adult has mainly gray-brown plumage, with reddish barring on the flanks and a red-orange face and throat, which is paler in the female. The male has a chestnut patch on its belly, but in the female this is much smaller or missing entirely. In flight, orange-red feathers can be seen on the outer edges of the short tail. The Gray Partridge forages for grain and other seeds on the ground and seldom flies far when flushed. It can survive on bare stubble, but huddles with others for warmth when snowy weather arrives.





Chukar

Scientific name:	*Alectoris chukar*
Length:	14 inches
Habitat:	Rocky arid mountains
Identification:	Ground-dwelling bird. Gray-brown plumage with black and white barring on flanks, pale buff face and throat outlined in black, gray breast, buff belly, red bill and legs
Similar species:	Similar size and shape to Gray Partridge, but different coloring

The Chukar is native to Asia and the Middle East, but was released in America as a game bird and has successfully established itself in dry rocky canyons in the west. It lives in groups of 5-40 birds known as coveys, and wild birds are very elusive - although game farm birds are released in the east for hunting. Its nest is a shallow depression in the earth, lined with feathers and grass and hidden among rocks, in which it lays 10-15 buffy-white, brown-spotted eggs. The female incubates them for around 25 days helped by the male, and the chicks leave the nest straight after hatching but cannot fly until about 2 weeks later. Families often come together in large groups in late summer. Both adult birds have gray-brown plumage above, black and white barring on the flanks, a pale buff face and throat outlined in black, a gray breast, and a buff belly.The bill and legs are red, and in flight red-orange feathers can be seen on the outer edges of the short tail. The male is larger and has small spurs on the leg. The juvenile lacks the distinctive marking of the adult and is small and mottled. The Chukar mainly eats seeds, grasshoppers and foliage.

Sharp-tailed Grouse

Scientific name: *Tympanuchus phasianellus*
Length: 17 inches
Habitat: Grasslands, sagebrush, woodland edges
Identification: Large ground-dwelling bird, sharp pointed tail. Brown mottled plumage above, lighter beneath with darker scaling, mostly white tail, yellow above eye. Male has purple neck sacs to inflate in display
Similar species: Sage Grouse is much larger with black belly. Female very like female Ring-necked Pheasant, but is smaller, with shorter tail and barring beneath

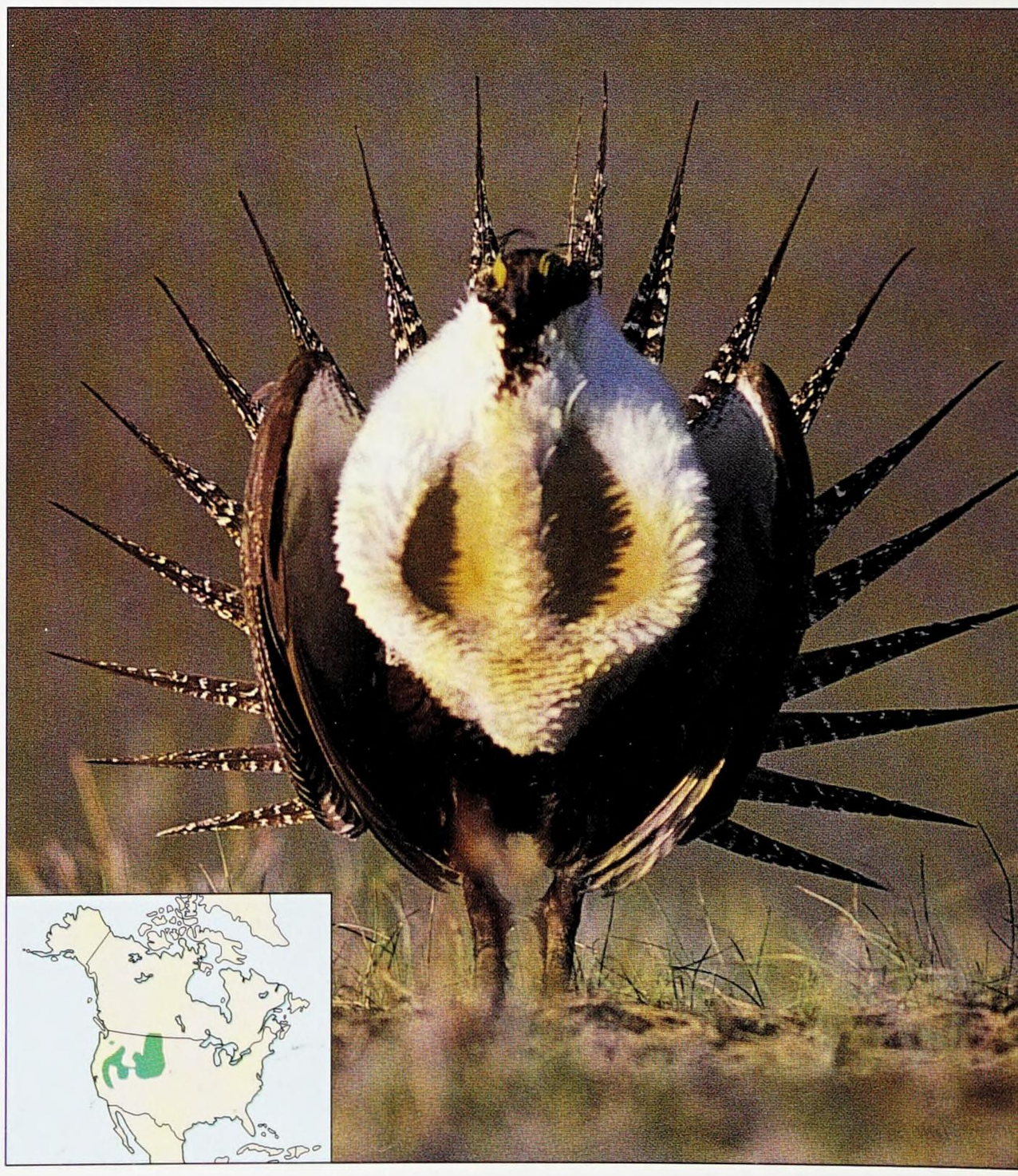
Although a ground-dwelling bird throughout much of the year, in colder weather the Sharp-tailed Grouse takes to the trees. It is fairly common across much of its range, and in spring large groups of males gather on traditional display grounds or leks to perform a courtship dance, strutting and bobbing and inflating purple neck sacs. The female then lays 10-12 buff eggs speckled with brown, in a shallow depression lined with grass and hidden in vegetation. The female incubates the eggs for around 24 days and the chicks stay with her for 6-8 weeks after hatching. Both adult birds have brown mottled plumage above, lighter beneath with darker brown scaling and spotting, a pointed tail with white outer feathers, and small yellow combs above the eye. Northern birds tend to be darker overall. The purple neck sacs of the male are not generally visible unless they are inflated in display. The Sharp-tailed Grouse sometimes interbreeds with Prairie-Chickens and the Blue Grouse. It eats berries, buds and leaves, but also insects.



Sage Grouse

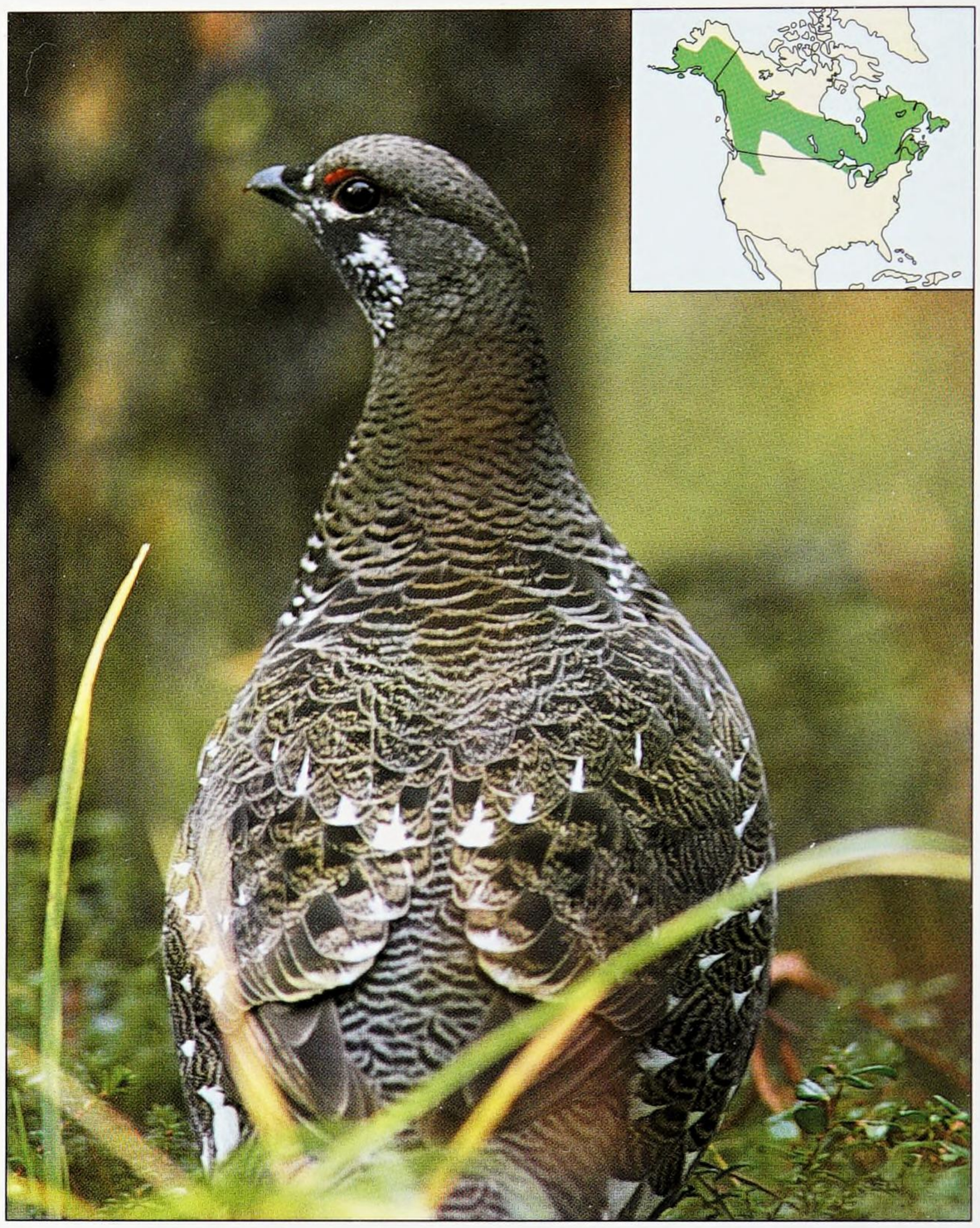
Scientific name: *Centrocercus urophasianus*
Length: 28 inches
Habitat: Sagebrush foothills and plains
Identification: Large ground-dwelling bird, long pointed tail. Gray-streaked plumage above, black belly. Male has black throat, white breast, in courtship fans tail and inflates breast
Similar species: Sharp-tailed Grouse is much smaller, lacks distinctive black belly, has outer white tail feathers

A very large bird, the Sage Grouse is found across the sagebrush flats of western America but its population is decreasing as its habitat disappears. In spring, large groups of males gather on a traditional display ground, known as a lek, with each male occupying its own small area. They perform a courtship dance (*right*) to attract females, strutting and bobbing with fanned tail and inflated chest, showing two yellow-green air sacs that the bird can rapidly inflate and deflate to produce a loud popping noise. One male can mate with several females, who then lay 7-12 greenish eggs spotted with brown in a shallow depression in the earth under sagebrush. The female incubates the eggs for around 26 days and the chicks stay with her for some time after hatching. Both adult birds have gray-streaked plumage above, a black belly and long pointed tail. The male is slightly larger with a longer spiky tail, and has a black throat and bib and a white collar and breast. The Sage Grouse mainly eats sagebrush buds and leaves, but will also feed on other plants.



Spruce Grouse

Scientific name: *Dendragapus canadensis*
Length: 16 inches
Habitat: Coniferous forests with dense undergrowth
Identification: Medium-size, ground-dwelling bird, short bill, short tail. Male slate-gray above, black beneath, red comb above eye, black tail with chestnut tip. Female mottled light brown, dark barring below
Similar species: Female very like female Blue Grouse, but is smaller with shorter tail and barring beneath



A common ground-dwelling bird across much of its range, but very hard to spot because it is so tame; it sits still without concern even within a few feet of observers. It is usually seen singly in dense conifer woodland; in spring, the male struts with its tail spread in a fan and drums with its wings. The female lays 6-12 buffy, spotted eggs, in a shallow scrape lined with grass under a plant or log. The female incubates the eggs for around 24 days and the chicks fly 10-12 weeks after hatching. The adult is medium-size and stocky, with a short bill and short tail. The male (*right*) is slate-gray above, has a black throat and chest outlined in white, white spots on the flanks, a red comb above the eye and a black tail with a chestnut tip. In the north, males do not have the chestnut tip but have a row of white spots across the tail instead. The female is mottled light brown, either with a reddish or grayish tinge, with black and white barring below. The Spruce Grouse eats the buds and needles of conifers, but also seeds and insects.



Blue Grouse

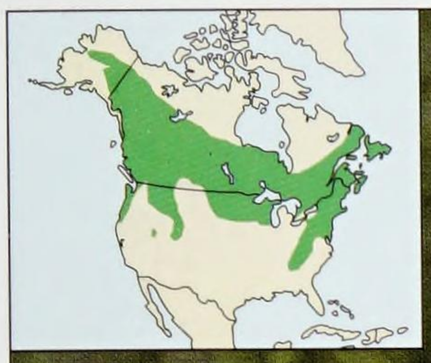
Scientific name: *Dendragapus obscurus*
Length: 20 inches
Habitat: Open coniferous or mixed woodland, brushy lowland, mountain slopes
Identification: Large, ground-dwelling bird, short bill, long tail. Male blue-gray, orange-yellow comb above eye, dark tail with gray tip, yellow or purplish neck sac only seen inflated in display. Female mottled gray-brown overall
Similar species: Female very like female Spruce Grouse, but is larger with longer tail and lacks barring beneath

The Blue Grouse is found in open lowland woods in the west, but moves up to higher altitudes in the winter; it is usually seen singly and prefers areas near large clearings. In spring, the male stands high up, often in a tree, spreading its tail in a fan and inflating its yellow or purplish neck sacs, which are surrounded by white-based feathers (*left*). It also flies down to strut with its tail fanned, dragging its wings. The female lays 6-10 creamy, brown-speckled eggs, in a scrape lined with pine needles and grass and sheltered under a tree, rock or log. The female incubates the eggs for around 26 days and the chicks stay with her for around 12 weeks after hatching. The adult is quite large, with a relatively long neck and tail. The male is mostly blue-gray, with an orange-yellow comb above the eye, and a dark tail with gray tip. The female and juvenile birds are fairly even mottled gray-brown all over, with a plainer gray belly and a gray band at the tip of the tail. In the northern Rockies, this species has an all-dark tail. The Blue Grouse eats pine needles in winter, but also seeds, berries and insects in summer.

Ruffed Grouse

Scientific name: *Bonasa umbellus*
Length: 17 inches
Habitat: Deciduous and mixed woodlands
Identification: Ground-dwelling bird, long neck, long tail. Male brownish with buff streaks above, gray-brown cross-barring on flanks, gray or reddish tail with dark cross-barring and broad black tip, black neck ruff is erected in display. Female mottled gray-brown overall, with smaller ruff and tail
Similar species: Female Spruce Grouse can look similar, but has barring beneath instead of sides and shorter tail

Fairly common across its range, the Ruffed Grouse is found on the ground in mixed woodland, but also perches high in trees. In spring, the male stands on a fallen log spreading its tail in a fan and puffing up its neck ruff, and drums the air with its wings - often for hours at a time. The female lays 9-12 buffy and sometimes spotted eggs, in a scrape lined with leaves and sheltered under a tree, bush, rock or log. The female incubates the eggs for around 24 days; the chicks fly around a week after hatching but stay with the mother for around 12 weeks. The adult is quite slender, with a long neck, crested head and relatively long rounded tail. The male is brownish with buff streaks above, gray-brown cross-barring on its flanks, a black neck ruff, and a gray or reddish tail with dark cross-barring and broad black tip. In the Pacific northwest, reddish birds predominate, but in the north and west their plumage is grayer. The female is mottled gray-brown overall and has a smaller ruff and tail, with the terminal band of the tail incomplete. The Ruffed Grouse eats buds, catkins and twigs in winter, but will also feed on seeds, berries and fruits in summer.

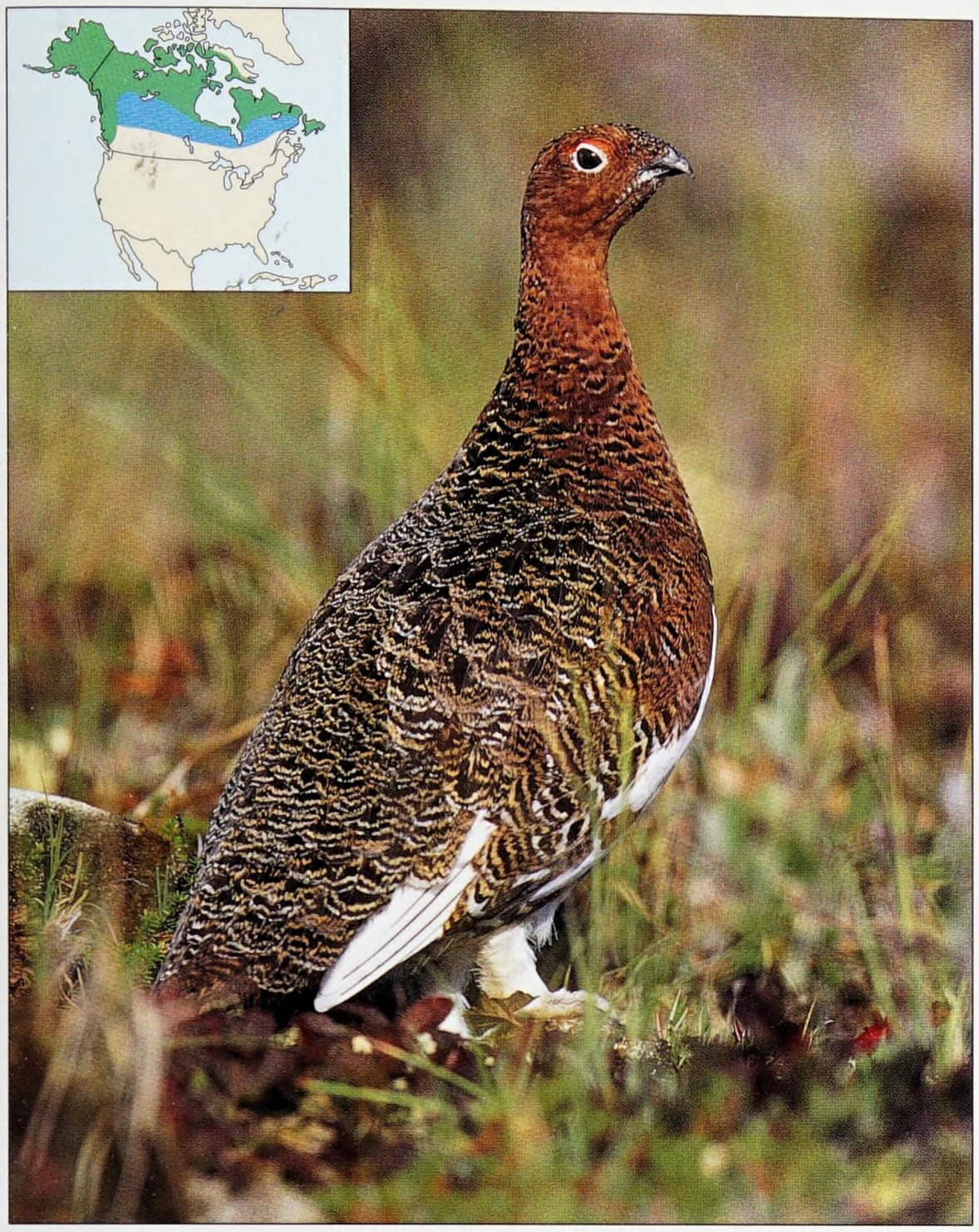




Rock Ptarmigan

Scientific name:	*Lagopus mutus*
Length:	14 inches
Habitat:	High rocky slopes, tundra
Identification:	Ground-dwelling bird with feathered feet. Summer male, dark brown with white wings and belly. Summer female, mottled brown, white wings. Both adults white winter plumage with black tail and bill, distinctive black eye line
Similar species:	In winter plumage, male Willow Ptarmigan lacks black eye line, White-tailed lacks black tail. In summer, male Willow is redder than male Rock. Female Willow and Rock difficult to tell apart

Although its range overlaps with the Willow, the Rock Ptarmigan is found on more barren, rocky tundra and at higher altitudes. It forms small flocks in winter, but is seen singly in summer. The female commonly lays 6-9 buffy eggs - although there can be as many as 16 - in a sheltered scrape on tundra. The female incubates the eggs for around 21 days, while the male defends the territory. The chicks leave the nest immediately after hatching and fly within about 10 days. The adult has feathered feet which act as "snowshoes" to enable it to walk on soft snow, and also to add insulation as white feathers have hollow cells filled with air. In winter, both adults have white plumage with a black tail and small black bill, the male has a distinctive black eye line. In summer the male turns dark brown, sometimes quite grayish, with white wings and belly. The summer female is mottled brown, with white wings; both birds retain the black tail and bill. The Rock Ptarmigan eats buds, fruits, seeds and insects in summer, but relies on twigs and buds in winter; its stomach contains special bacteria enabling it to digest woody material.



Willow Ptarmigan

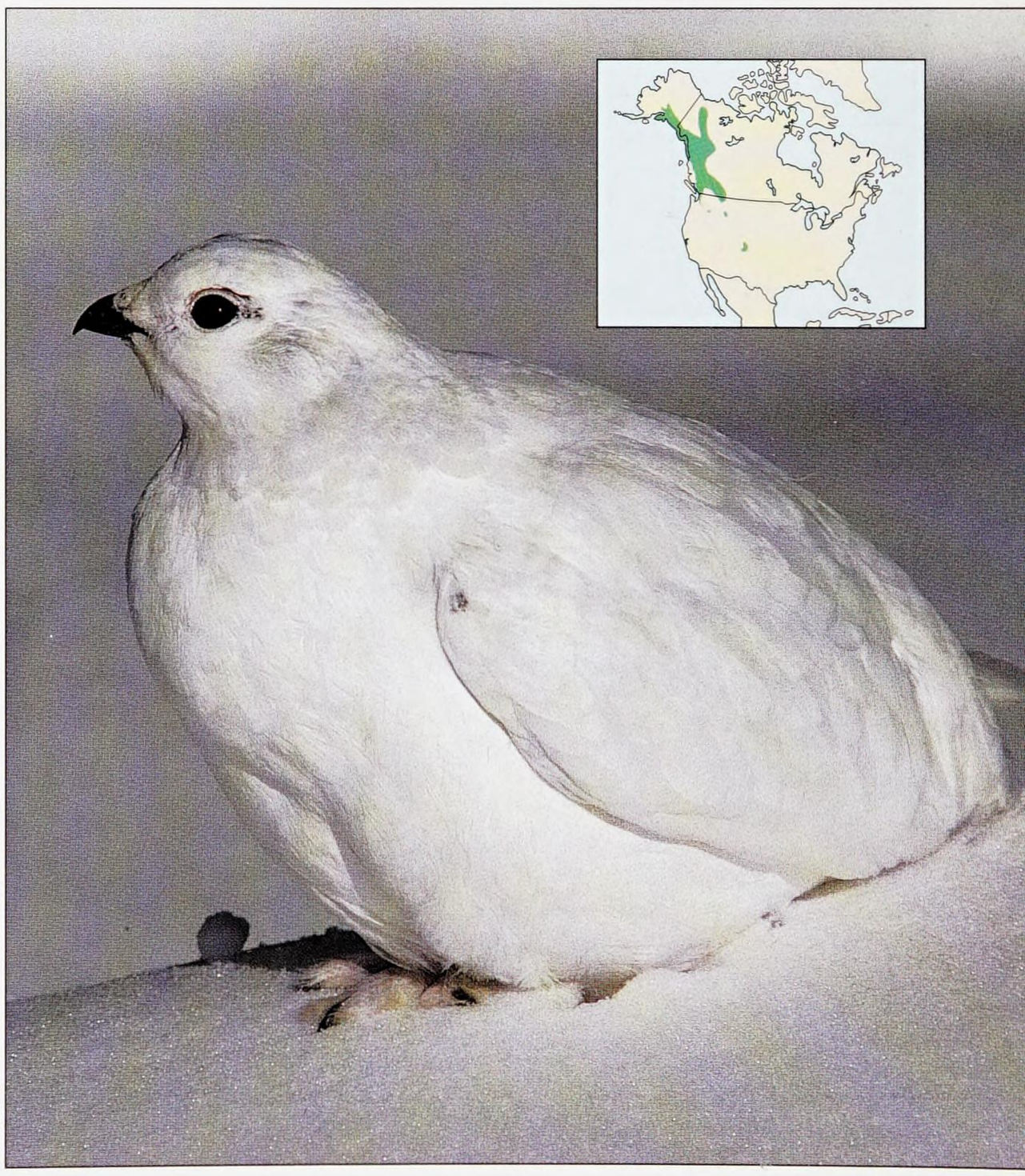
Scientific name: *Lagopus lagopus*
Length: 15 inches
Habitat: Tundra, willow thickets
Identification: Ground-dwelling bird with feathered feet. Summer male, chestnut with white wings and belly. Summer female, mottled brown, white wings. Both adults white winter plumage with black tail and bill
Similar species: In winter plumage, male Rock Ptarmigan has black eye line, White-tailed lacks black tail. In summer, male Willow is redder than male Rock. Female Willow and Rock difficult to tell apart

Preferring the cold of the north, the Willow Ptarmigan is the most numerous grouse of the north and is found on open tundra and in willow thickets at the tree line. It gathers in small flocks in winter, but is more likely to be seen singly in summer. The female lays 7-12 pale red-brown spotted eggs, in a depression on tundra sheltered under vegetation, rocks or logs. The female incubates the eggs for around 22 days, while the male defends the territory. The chicks leave the nest immediately after hatching and fly within a week. Several families gather in large flocks to migrate southward when winter begins to set in. The adult has feathered feet to add insulation and enable it to walk on snow, and a distinctive stout black bill. In winter, both adults have white plumage with a black tail and bill. In summer the male turns chestnut, with white wings and belly. The summer female is mottled brown, with white wings; both birds retain the black tail and bill. The Willow Ptarmigan eats buds, fruits, catkins and insects in summer, but relies mainly on the twigs and buds of willows in winter.

White-tailed Ptarmigan

Scientific name: *Lagopus leucurus*
Length: 12½ inches
Habitat: Rocky mountain slopes, high meadows
Identification: Ground-dwelling bird with feathered feet. Summer plumage mottled black-brown with white wings and belly, white tail. All white winter plumage with black bill
Similar species: In both summer and winter plumage, its white tail distinguishes this ptarmigan from the other two

The White-tailed Ptarmigan has a less extensive range than the Willow and the Rock, although it is common on alpine slopes in the northwest. It can be hard to spot as it often sits still when approached, relying on its camouflage. Like other ptarmigan, it gathers in small flocks in winter, but is more likely to be seen singly in summer. The female lays 6-14 buff, faintly spotted eggs, in a scrape lined with grass and hidden in rocks just above the timberline. The female incubates the eggs for around 3 weeks, while the male defends the territory. The chicks leave the nest soon after hatching, but stay with the female until the following spring. The adult is the smallest of the three American ptarmigans; it has feathered feet and a distinctive small black bill. In winter, both adults have entirely white plumage; in summer the plumage becomes mottled black-brown, but with white wings, belly, and tail. The White-tailed Ptarmigan eats flowers, fruits, catkins and insects in summer, but relies mainly on buds in winter.



Ring-necked Pheasant

Scientific name:	*Phasianus colchicus*
Length:	21 inches (female), 33 inches (male)
Habitat:	Open country, farmland, woodland edges
Identification:	Large long-tailed game bird. Male iridescent bronze mottled with brown, black and green, glossy green-black head, red eye patches, white collar. Female buffy overall
Similar species:	Male unmistakable. Female very like female Sharp-tailed Grouse, but is larger, with longer tail and lacks barring beneath

A native of Asia, the Ring-necked Pheasant was introduced to America in the late 19th century as a game bird and has established itself in open country, particularly farmland. In many areas it is quite common, although populations are smaller in the east. Each male attracts a number of females, who do not build a nest, but lay 7-14 buff or pale olive eggs in a scrape lined with grass and concealed in grass or weeds - several are often quite close together. The eggs are incubated for around 24 days by the female, with the male playing very little part. The chicks fly around 2 weeks after hatching. The male (*below*) has a very long, pointed tail and short, rounded wings. Its plumage is iridescent bronze with golden brown flanks, blue-black belly and green or rust-colored rump; its bronze tail is barred with black. Its head and neck are glossy green-black, usually with a white collar, and it has red eye patches and iridescent feathered ear tufts. The female is buffy overall and much smaller, with a shorter, barred tail. Other sub-species have also been introduced and have interbred, so there are variations in some areas, such as the white-winged birds found in parts of the west and the Japanese Green Pheasant in Virginia and Delaware. The Ring-necked Pheasant is a fast runner, but rises up noisily when flushed. It eats seeds, nuts, berries and insects.





Wild Turkey

Scientific name:	*Meleagris gallopavo*
Length:	37 inches (female), 46 inches (male)
Habitat:	Open pine-oak forest, oak woods
Identification:	Very large game bird, huge body, thin neck, small head. Male has bronze iridescent plumage, tip of wings barred with white, bare-skinned blue and red head, long dark breast tuft. Female smaller and duller, sometimes lacks breast tuft
Similar species:	Size and shape make the Wild Turkey unmistakable

The largest North American game bird, the wary Wild Turkey is also the ancestor of the domesticated farmyard bird. It inhabits open forest and, although it feeds on the ground, it is a strong flier and roosts in trees at night. In spring, each male struts in his own small clearing in the forest, with tail feathers spread in a glorious fan, head back and wings dragging, and uttering a gobbling mating call. Around ten or more females will answer, then they depart to lay 8-16 buffy, spotted eggs in a shallow depression in the woods, lined with grass and leaves. The eggs are incubated for around a month by the female only; the fluffy chicks leave the nest soon after hatching and can make short flights within a few weeks, but stay with the mother until the following spring. The adult has a huge body, with long legs, a long thin neck and a small head. The male has bronze iridescent plumage, with the tip of the wings barred with white, a bare-skinned blue and red head, and a long dark breast tuft. In western birds, the tail is tipped with white, in eastern it is tipped with chestnut. The female and juvenile birds are smaller and duller, and sometimes lack the breast tuft. The Wild Turkey was once abundant, but hunting and the destruction of its natural habitat decreased populations - although restocking has led to a comeback and introduced it into new areas. It forages on the ground for seeds, nuts, berries, acorns and insects.

Northern Bobwhite

Scientific name: *Colinus virginianus*
Length: $9\frac{3}{4}$ inches
Habitat: Brushland, open woodland
Identification: Small, rounded, ground-dwelling bird. Both adults mottled red-brown, striped flanks, short gray tail. Male has white throat and eye stripe. Female has buffy throat and eye stripe
Similar species: Is usually the only quail in its range, so size and coloring make it unmistakable



The Northern Bobwhite is usually the only quail to be found in the southeast, although its range does overlap slightly with that of the Scaled Quail. It prefers brushland and open woodland, and is usually seen in flocks or coveys of 25-30 birds, except in the breeding season. Its 10-15 creamy white eggs are laid in a shallow depression lined with grass, concealed in brush or among plants. They are incubated for around 3 weeks, by both female and male, and the chicks stay with both adults until the following spring. The adult is round-bodied, with a very short gray tail, mottled red-brown plumage, and chestnut-striped flanks. The male (*right*) has a white eye stripe and throat, with black between which extends round under the throat. The female has buffy throat and eye stripe. The juvenile is smaller and duller. The Northern Bobwhite prefers berries, insects, seeds and leaves. Coveys often roost huddled in a ring, with heads facing out to give each bird a clear flight path to escape danger.

Montezuma Quail

Scientific name: *Cyrtonyx montezumae*
Length: $8\frac{1}{2}$ inches
Habitat: Grassy undergrowth of wooded foothills
Identification: Small, plump, ground-dwelling bird. Male has distinctive black and white facial pattern, brown crest on back of head, back and wings mottled black, brown and tan, sides and flanks dark blue-gray with white spots. Female mottled brown
Similar species: Male unmistakable. Crest at the back gives female's head a distinctive rounded shape



Secretive and uncommon in the foothills of the southwest, the Montezuma Quail is also easily overlooked as it sits very still when approached, only bursting into flight when it is almost underfoot. It prefers the grassy undergrowth of juniper-oak and pine-oak woodlands, and was previously known as the Harlequin Quail or Mearn's Quail. Its 7-14 white eggs are laid in a shallow depression lined with vegetation, concealed in dense grass. They are incubated for up to 26 days, mainly by the female, but the male helps to brood and rear the chicks. The adult is small and plump, with a short tail and rounded wings. The male (*right*) has a distinctive black and white facial pattern, a rounded brown crest on the back of its head; its back and wings are mottled black, brown and tan, and the sides and flanks are dark blue-gray with white spots. The female is mottled brown, also with a rounded crest to the back of the head. The juvenile is smaller and paler, with darker spotted underparts. The Montezuma Quail is usually found in pairs, although families join together into flocks in fall. It prefers berries and acorns, but also eats insects and scratches up seeds, nuts and bulbs in winter.



Scaled Quail

Scientific name:	*Callipepla squamata*
Length:	10 inches
Habitat:	Barren plateau, semidesert scrubland, dry open grassland
Identification:	Stocky ground-dwelling bird. Adults blue-gray with dark tips to body feathers giving a scaled look, fluffy white crest. Female's crest is shorter
Similar species:	No similar birds in its range

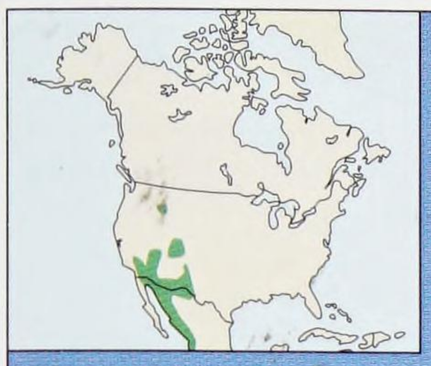
Although part of its range overlaps with that of the Northern Bobwhite, the Scaled Quail is distinctive because of its very different coloring. It prefers barren mesas, dry open grassland and semidesert areas, and forms large coveys of 100 or more birds, except in the breeding season. It nests in the rainy season, when moisture produces vegetation and there is water for chicks to drink, and often does not breed in dry summers. It does not build a nest, but lays 9-18 whitish, pear-shaped eggs, speckled with brown, in a shallow depression lined with grass and well concealed in brush or among cactus. The eggs are incubated for about 3 weeks, mainly by the female, and the chicks stay with both parents until the following spring. The adult is stocky and has blue-gray plumage with dark tips to the body feathers, which gives a scaled look, and a fluffy white crest - one of its nicknames is "cottontop". The female's crest is shorter. The juvenile is much like the adult, but is more mottled with less distinct scaling. Some males in southern Texas have a dark chestnut patch on the belly. The Scaled Quail eats insects and seeds; they are often seen near farmsteads, where they can eat left-over grain from animal feed and drink from man-made water holes.

California Quail

Scientific name:	*Callipepla californica*
Length:	10 inches
Habitat:	Open woodland, brushy foothills
Identification:	Small ground-dwelling bird with longish tail. Adults gray-brown above, creamy belly scaled in brown, brown sides streaked white, curved head plume. Male has brown crown and black throat edged with white. Female's plume is smaller
Similar species:	Gambel's Quail almost identical, but has chestnut flanks and no scaling

Common in open woodland, brushy foothills and suburbs near a permanent source of water, the California Quail is restricted to the far west - although it has also been introduced to British Columbia and Utah. It forms large coveys in fall and winter, which break up into breeding pairs in spring. The female lays 12-15 buff, brown-spotted eggs, in a shallow grass-lined scrape under a bush or rock. The eggs are incubated for around 3 weeks by the female and the chicks can fly 10 days after hatching. The adult is rather slender and long-tailed, gray-brown above, with a scaled nape, creamy belly scaled in brown, brown sides streaked with white, and a curved head plume. The male has a pale forehead, and a brown crown and black throat both edged with white. The female's plume is smaller and the juvenile is smaller with less distinct, paler coloring. The California Quail eats insects, fruits, seeds and berries, and roosts in trees at night for safety. In fall and winter, flocks are often seen in city parks, gardens and yards.





Gambel's Quail *(above)*

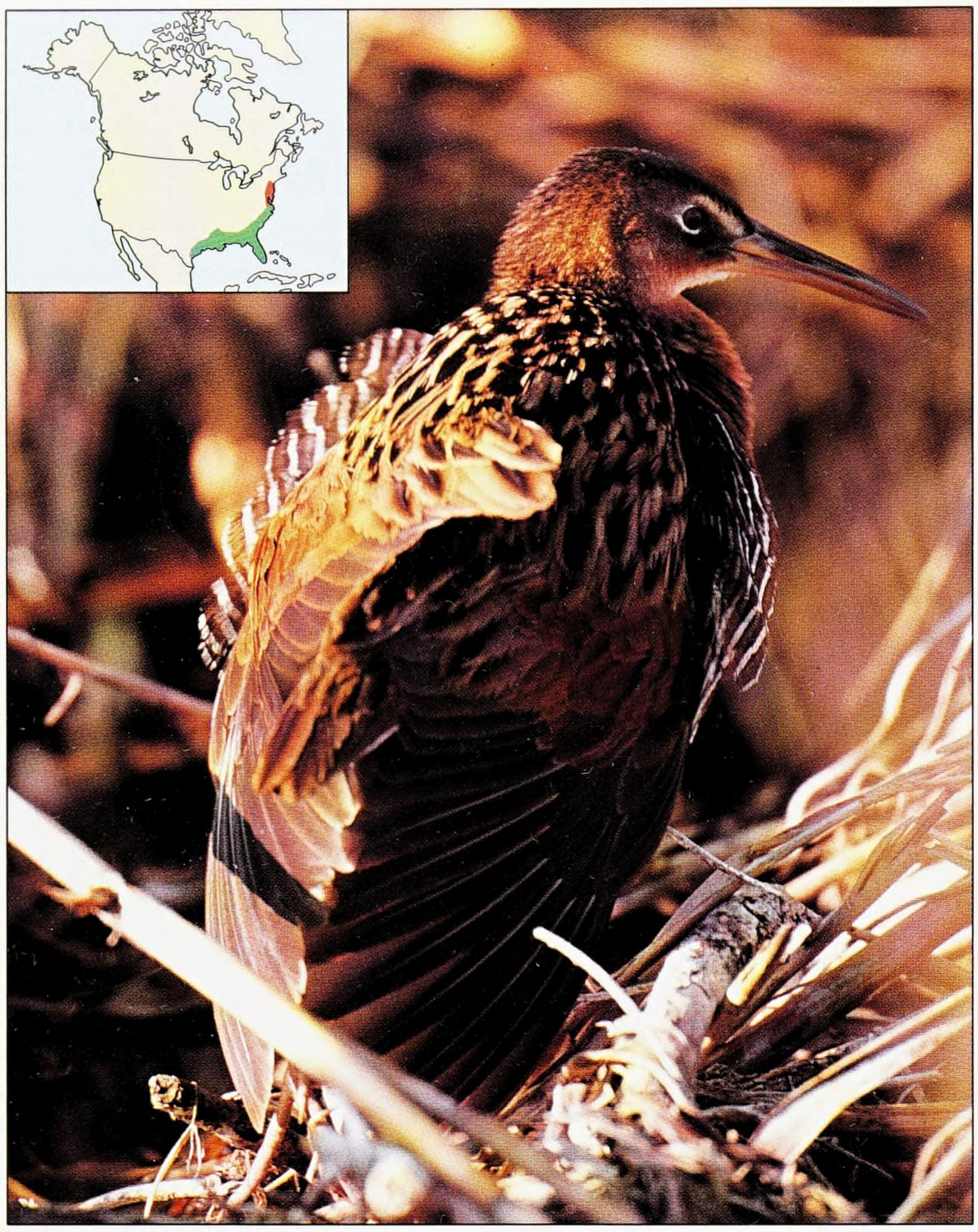
Scientific name:	*Callipepla gambelii*
Length:	11 inches
Habitat:	Desert scrubland, thickets
Identification:	Small ground-dwelling bird with longish tail. Adults grayish above, creamy belly, chestnut sides streaked white, curved head plume. Male has chestnut crown and black throat edged with white, black patch on belly. Female's plume is smaller
Similar species:	California Quail almost identical, but has brown flanks and scaling on underparts

Gambel's Quail is common within its range, which is restricted to the southwest. It inhabits desert scrubland and thickets, preferably near a permanent source of water, and forms large coveys of from 20 to more than 100 birds during fall and winter. In spring, the coveys break up into breeding pairs. The female lays 12-20 buffy-white eggs, with brown markings, in a shallow scrape in the ground lined with grass and well-shaded under a bush or rock or among cactus. The eggs are incubated for around 3 weeks, mainly by the female but the male helps care for the chicks, which stay with both parents until the following spring. The adult is rather slender and long-tailed, and is grayish above, with a creamy belly, chestnut sides streaked with white, and a curved head plume. The male has a dark forehead, a chestnut crown and black throat both edged with white, and a black patch on the belly. The female's plume is rather smaller and the juvenile is smaller with less distinct and paler coloring. Gambel's Quail forages in the desert during the day for insects, fruits, leaves and seeds, but gathers at water sources at nightfall to drink its fill before roosting.

Mountain Quail

Scientific name:	*Oreortyx pictus*
Length:	11 inches
Habitat:	Mountains up to 10,000 feet, brushy foothills, chaparral
Identification:	Ground-dwelling bird with shortish tail. Adults gray-blue head, neck and chest, chestnut throat patch with creamy border, chestnut sides streaked white, brown back, long double head plume. Female's plume is smaller
Similar species:	Longer, straight head plume distinguishes the Mountain Quail from the other two western quails

A common but elusive bird, the Mountain Quail is found in the brushy foothills, chaparral and mountains of the Pacific states. It migrates on foot from higher altitudes to the more protected foothills, where it spends the winter in coveys of 6-12 birds. When disturbed it tends to run through the thick cover, rather than rising into the air. The female lays 8-15 buffy-red eggs, in a shallow scrape lined with grass and leaves and hidden under thick vegetation, logs or rocks. The eggs are incubated for up to 4 weeks by the female and the chicks can fly 14 days after hatching but stay for some time in family groups. The adult is quite short-tailed, with a gray-blue head, neck and chest, a chestnut throat patch with a creamy border, chestnut sides streaked white, a brown back, and a long double head plume. The female's plume is smaller and the juvenile is smaller but with similar coloring to the adult. Coastal birds tend to be browner than those in the interior. The Mountain Quail eats leaves, buds and insects in summer, but also feeds on seeds, nuts and berries in winter.



King Rail

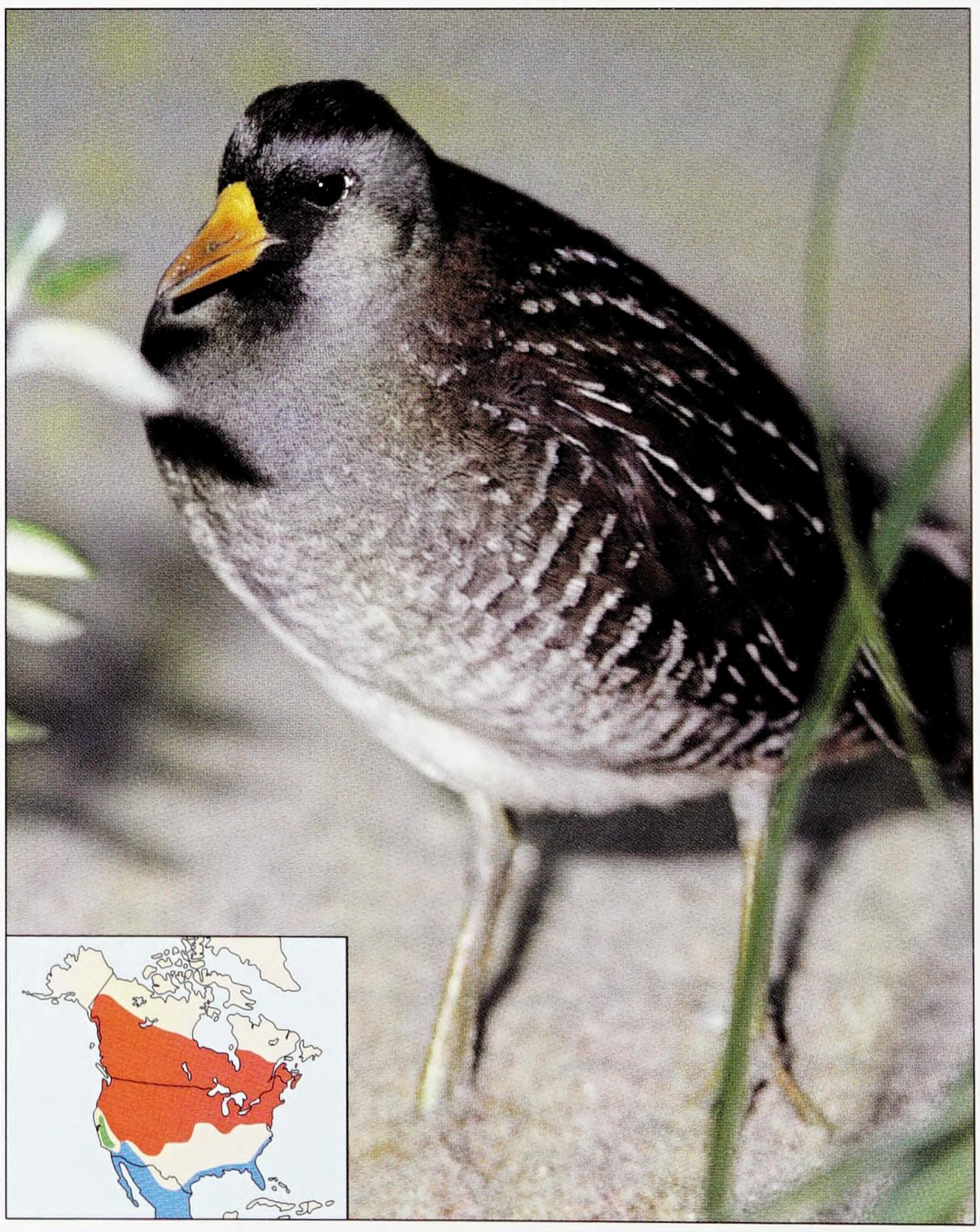
Scientific name:	*Rallus elegans*
Length:	15 inches
Habitat:	Freshwater marshes
Identification:	Long-billed, long-necked, wading marsh bird. Tawny edges to black-centered back feathers, tawny wing coverts and breast, barred flanks
Similar species:	Virginia Rail is smaller, Clapper Rail has olive wing coverts, grayish edges to brown-centered back feathers

Unlike the Clapper Rail, the King Rail prefers fresh water and their ranges only overlap in some brackish areas. The largest of the North American rails, it is mainly seen in the freshwater marshes of the Gulf coast, but also sometimes well inland in the east. Like the Clapper, it is rarely seen in the open but is often heard, particularly at dawn and dusk. Its nest is a cup of marsh grass, hidden in the dense vegetation of the shallows. The 5-15 buffy eggs spotted with brown are incubated by both birds for around 3 weeks. The young chicks leave the nest soon after hatching and are independent by the time they are 9 weeks old. The adult has a long neck and body, short tail and a long, slightly decurved bill. The black-centered back feathers have tawny edges, it has tawny wing coverts, a tawny breast, black and white barred flanks and a slate-gray head with gray-brown cheeks. The juvenile is darker above and paler beneath. The King Rail eats crustaceans, grain, berries and insects.

Sora

Scientific name:	*Porzana carolina*
Length:	13¾ inches
Habitat:	Freshwater and brackish marshes, salt marshes
Identification:	Short-billed wading marsh bird. Black face and throat patch, rich brown mottled back, gray head, neck and chest, barred flanks and belly, yellow bill and feet
Similar species:	Short bill and less vivid coloring distinguish the Sora from other rails

Widespread and common across much of North America, the Sora is seen much more often than the other rails. When walking across mud it can often be seen flicking its short tail. During migration and in winter it is usually seen in tidal saltwater marshes, but it prefers large freshwater marshes for breeding. Its nest is a basket woven of marsh plant stalks and fastened above water level, or sometimes just a simple cup of grass. The 7-16 buffy eggs spotted with brown are incubated by both birds for about 3 weeks, and the young, downy chicks leave the nest soon after hatching. The adult is smaller and more chunky than other rails, with a short, thick, yellow or greenish-yellow bill and yellow feet. It has a black face and throat patch, a rich brown mottled back, gray head, neck and chest, barred flanks and belly, and yellow feet. The juvenile is a plainer, buffy-brown color. The Sora rarely flies, except when it is flushed or at night during spring and fall migration. It eats insects, mollusks, seeds and duckweed.



Clapper Rail

Scientific name: *Rallus longirostris*
Length: 14½ inches
Habitat: Coastal salt marshes
Identification: Long-billed, long-necked, wading marsh bird. Grayish edges to brown-centered back feathers, olive wing coverts, tawny breast, barred flanks
Similar species: Virginia Rail is smaller, King Rail has tawny wing coverts, tawny edges to black-centered back feathers

A common but secretive bird, the Clapper Rail inhabits the salt marshes of the Atlantic and Gulf coasts. It has declined as its habitat vanishes, and is now scarce in the west around California and the Colorado River. Although it is rarely seen in the open it is often heard - its noisy clattering carries far over the reeds. Its nest is made in clumps of marsh grass, a platform of dead plants with surrounding grasses arched over to form a roof. The 5-14 buffy-greenish eggs spotted with brown are incubated by both birds for around 21 days. The young chicks leave the nest soon after hatching and are independent by the time they are 6 weeks old. The adult has a long neck, a long wedge-shaped body and a long, slightly decurved bill. The brown-centered back feathers have grayish edges, it has olive wing coverts, a tawny breast, and barred flanks. The exact color of the plumage does vary - east coast species tend to be duller, west coast birds are brighter below. Unlike most wading birds, the Clapper Rail can swim for short distances and dive under water to escape predators. It eats crabs, mollusks and insects.



Virginia Rail

Scientific name: *Rallus limicola*
Length: 9½ inches
Habitat: Freshwater and brackish marshes, wetlands, coastal salt marshes
Identification: Long-billed, long-necked, wading marsh bird. Tawny edges to black-centered back feathers, cinnamon-brown wing coverts and breast, barred flanks, gray face, white throat
Similar species: King Rail is bigger, Clapper Rail has olive wing coverts, grayish edges to brown-centered back feathers

The Virginia Rail has a much wider range than the other two rails and inhabits both fresh and salt water marshes. Like the others, it is also a secretive bird that is heard more often than it is seen, but sometimes comes out into the open at dawn to forage. Its nest is woven of marsh plants, lined with grasses and fastened in dense vegetation above the water level. The 5-12 buff eggs spotted with brown are incubated by both birds for around 3 weeks, and the young, downy black chicks leave the nest soon after hatching. The adult has a long neck and body, short tail and a long, slightly decurved bill. The black-centered back feathers have tawny edges, it has cinnamon-brown wing coverts and breast, strongly black and white barred flanks and a gray face with a white throat. The juvenile is blackish-brown above and mottled gray-black beneath. The Virginia Rail probes down into the mud with its long bill, looking for insects, mollusks and small fish - it also sometimes eats seeds and aquatic plants.



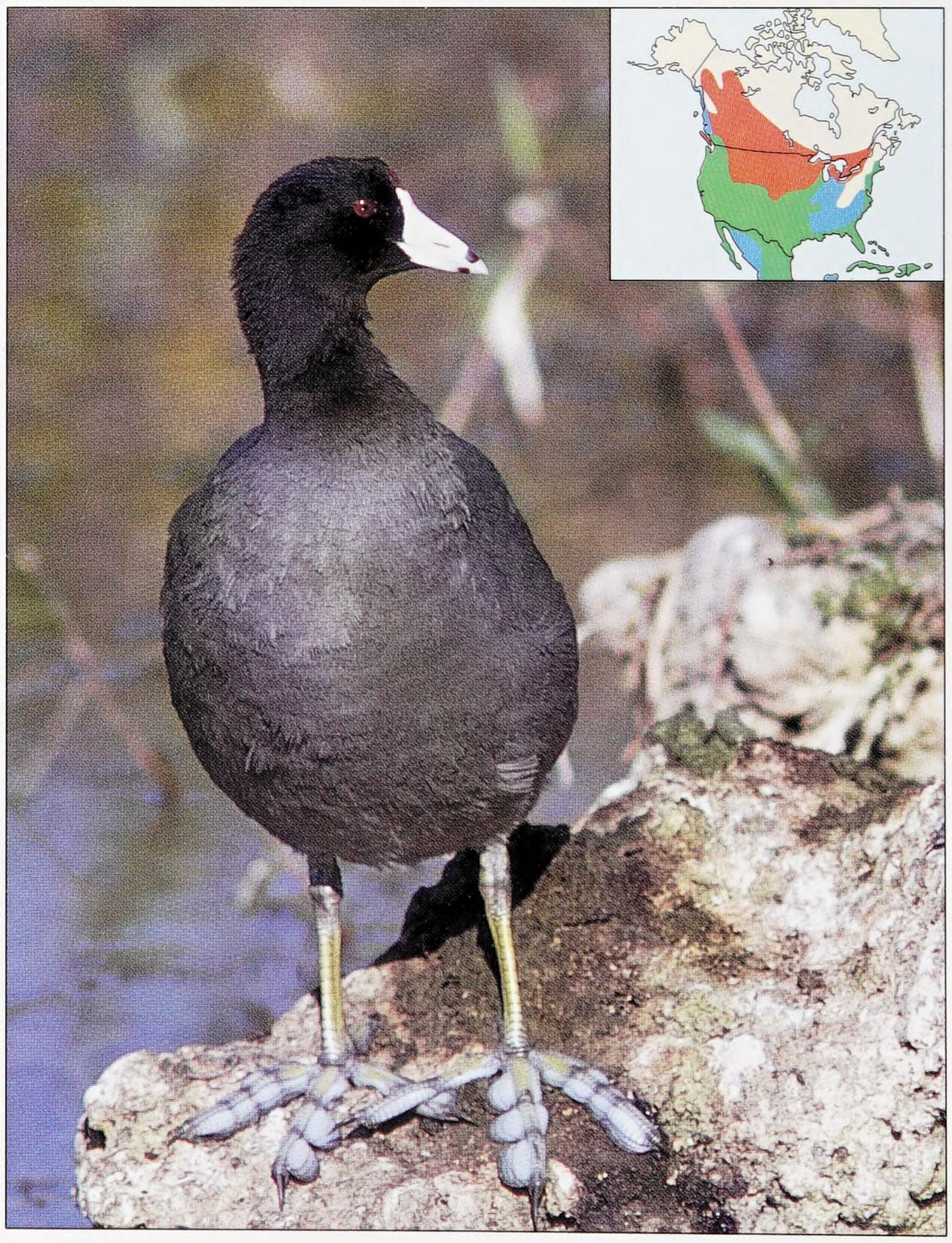
Purple Gallinule



Scientific name: *Porphyrula martinica*
Length: 13 inches
Habitat: Freshwater swamps, lagoons, marshes
Identification: Warm-water marsh bird, long legs, large feet. Bright purplish-blue head, neck and underparts, pale blue forehead shield, red and yellow bill, brown-green back, yellow legs and feet
Similar species: Coloring is unmistakable

The colorful Purple Gallinule prefers warm-water marshes and is mainly found in the south and around the Gulf, although it often wanders great distances and has been seen much further north in summer. It spends the winter in southern Florida and down into Argentina. Its nest is a shallow cup of grass stems and reeds, lined with leaves and attached to marsh vegetation. It lays 5-10 buff eggs, spotted with brown, and the downy chicks leave the nest soon after hatching. The adult bird has long legs and very large, yellow feet - which allow it to walk across lily pads and floating marsh vegetation. It has a bright purplish-blue head, neck and underparts, white under the tail, a pale blue forehead shield, a red bill tipped with yellow and a brown-green back. The juvenile is much plainer, buffy underneath with an olive back, greenish wings and dull olive legs and feet. The Purple Gallinule can fly, but is reluctant to do so and also rarely swims. It eats seeds, grain, insects, frogs and birds' eggs, as well as vegetation.

American Coot



Scientific name: *Fulica americana*
Length: 15½ inches
Habitat: Freshwater marshes, wetlands, salt marshes
Identification: Stocky marsh bird, big lobed feet. Black head and neck, ivory-colored forehead shield with reddish upper edge, whitish bill with dark band near tip, slate body
Similar species: Common Moorhen has white line and red facial shield

The American Coot is fairly widespread and common on lakes, ponds and marshes across most of North America. It is seen in flocks of hundreds of birds and often becomes quite tame in urban areas, where it lives in parks and on golf courses. Its nest is a platform of reeds and marsh vegetation, usually on the edge of open water, and old nests are used throughout the year for resting and preening. It lays 8-20 buff or pinkish, brown-spotted eggs, which are incubated for around 25 days by both adult birds. The downy chicks have a red and blue frontal shield, which seems to trigger a feeding impulse in the adult; they leave the nest soon after hatching and are independent within 7-8 weeks. The adult is stocky, with big lobed feet that enable it to walk across floating vegetation, and are useful for swimming. It has a black head and neck, ivory-colored forehead shield with a reddish upper edge, a whitish bill with a dark band near the tip, and a slate-gray body. Juveniles are paler, but begin to achieve adult plumage by their first winter. Coots nod their heads as they swim, and in flight the white trailing edge along most of the wing is distinctive. They dive to the bottom to catch fish and mollusks, but also dabble on the surface for insects and pond weed and forage on lawns in urban areas.



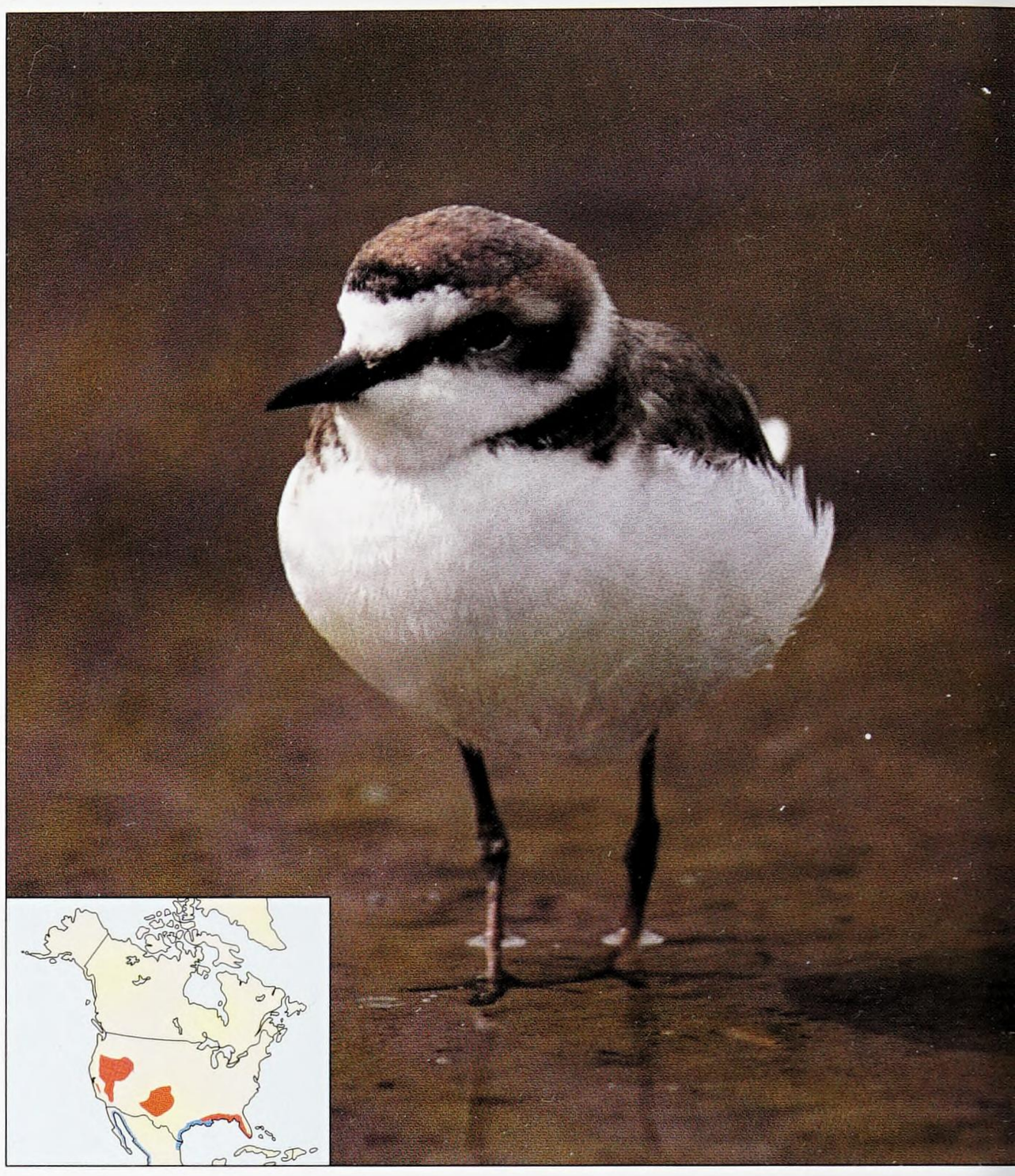
Common Moorhen

Scientific name:	*Gallinula chloropus*
Length:	14 inches
Habitat:	Ponds, freshwater marshes, slow-moving rivers
Identification:	Marsh bird, long legs, large feet. Black-gray head and neck, red forehead shield, red bill with yellow tip, brownish-olive back, slate underparts, white streak on flanks, yellow legs and feet
Similar species:	Distinguished from Purple Gallinule and American Coot by white line and red facial shield

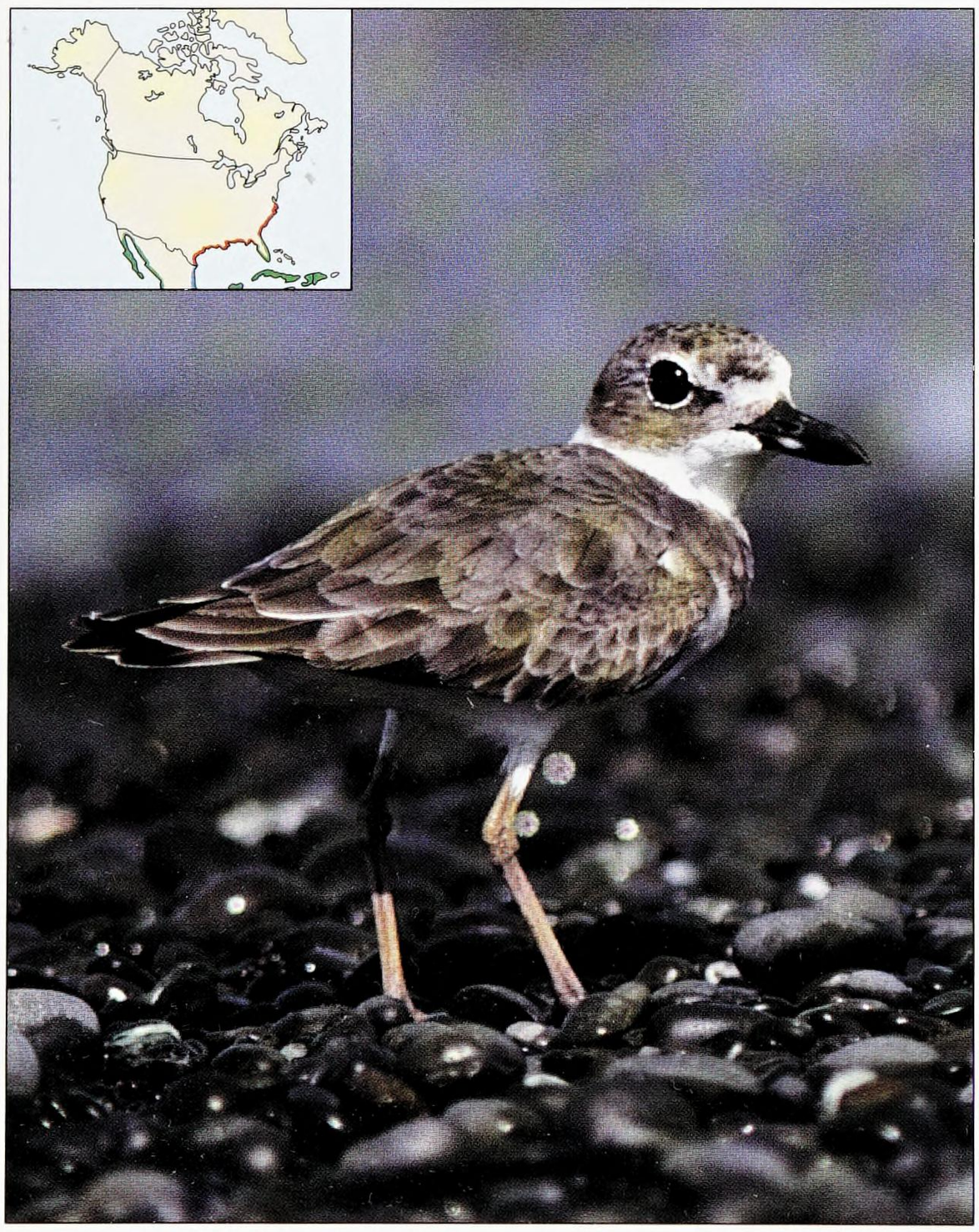
Related to the Purple Gallinule, the Common Moorhen was once known in North America as the Common Gallinule. It is fairly widespread and common in freshwater marshes, ponds and slow-moving rivers across much of the country - it is happy with only a small patch of cattails or reeds. Its nest is built of grass stems and reeds, in marsh vegetation a foot or so above the water level, often with a ramp of compressed vegetation leading down to the water. It lays 8-12 buff, dark spotted eggs, which are incubated for around 21 days by both parent birds; the downy chicks are ready to leave the nest quite soon after hatching. Like the Purple Gallinule, the adult has long legs and very large, yellow feet to allow it to walk across lily pads and floating marsh vegetation. It has a black-gray head and neck, a red forehead shield, a red bill with a yellow tip, a brownish-olive back, and slate-gray underparts with a white streak on the flanks. The juvenile is very similar, but is rather duller with a dark bill and no red facial shield. The Common Moorhen has a very wide diet - it eats mosquitoes, spiders, tadpoles, insect larvae, fruits and seeds.

Snowy Plover

Scientific name: *Charadrius alexandrinus*
Length: $6\frac{1}{4}$ inches
Habitat: Dry sandy beaches, salty flats
Identification: Small, long-legged, short-winged, shore bird. Pale sandy gray-brown above, face and underparts white, dark gray legs and feet, thin black bill. Breeding male black side band
Similar species: On other similar plovers, the side band extends round as breast band. Wilson's Plover is darker, larger black bill. Piping Plover has shorter, thicker bill, and yellow legs. Semipalmated Plover is much darker, with yellow legs



Many North American plovers are very similar and are quite difficult to tell apart - and parts of their ranges overlap. The Snowy Plover can usually be distinguished by its gray legs and thin, black bill. It is found all year round on the barren sandy beaches of the Pacific, with some also on the Gulf coast, and in summer on salt flats in some areas of the interior. It breeds in coastal areas, but is now an endangered species, threatened by the loss of safe nesting sites. Its nest is a scrape in the sand, in which it lays 3 buffy eggs that are tended by both adults alternately for around 4 weeks. The downy chicks leave the nest soon after hatching and are independent within a month. The adult is small, long-legged and short-winged, with a quite long, thin, black bill. Its plumage is pale sandy gray-brown above, with white face and underparts, and dark gray legs and feet.The breeding male has a black side band and a broken black eye stripe. Its coloring gives the Snowy Plover perfect camouflage on sandy beaches as soon as it stops moving. It mainly eats insects and small crustaceans.



Wilson's Plover

Scientific name: *Charadrius wilsonia*
Length: $7\frac{3}{4}$ inches
Habitat: Sandy beaches, mud flats
Identification: Small, long-legged, short-winged, shore bird. Dark sandy gray-brown above, face and underparts white, dull pinky-gray legs and feet, long, heavy black bill. Breeding male broad black breast band
Similar species: Snowy Plover has paler plumage, thin black bill. Piping Plover is paler with shorter thick bill, and yellow legs. Semipalmated Plover is much darker, with more black on face, and yellow legs

Wilson's Plover can usually be distinguished by its pinky-gray legs and long, thick, black bill. It is found all year round on the sandy beaches of Florida and the southern Pacific coast, and in summer round the northern Gulf coast and up along the Atlantic coast. It is seldom seen in large numbers and rarely ventures inland, but casual migrants have been recorded in California and around the Great Lakes. It breeds in coastal areas, making a scrape in the sand in which it lays 2-4 buffy eggs that are tended by both adults alternately for around 3 weeks. The downy chicks leave the nest soon after hatching and are independent within a month. The adult is small, long-legged and short-winged, with a long, thick, black bill. Its plumage is dark sandy gray-brown above, with white face and underparts, and dull pinky-gray legs and feet. The breeding male has a broad black chest band; in the female and winter male, this is dark sandy-brown. The juvenile is similar to the female, but has slight scaling on upperparts. The coloring of Wilson's Plover gives it perfect camouflage on sandy beaches. It mainly eats insects.



Black-bellied Plover

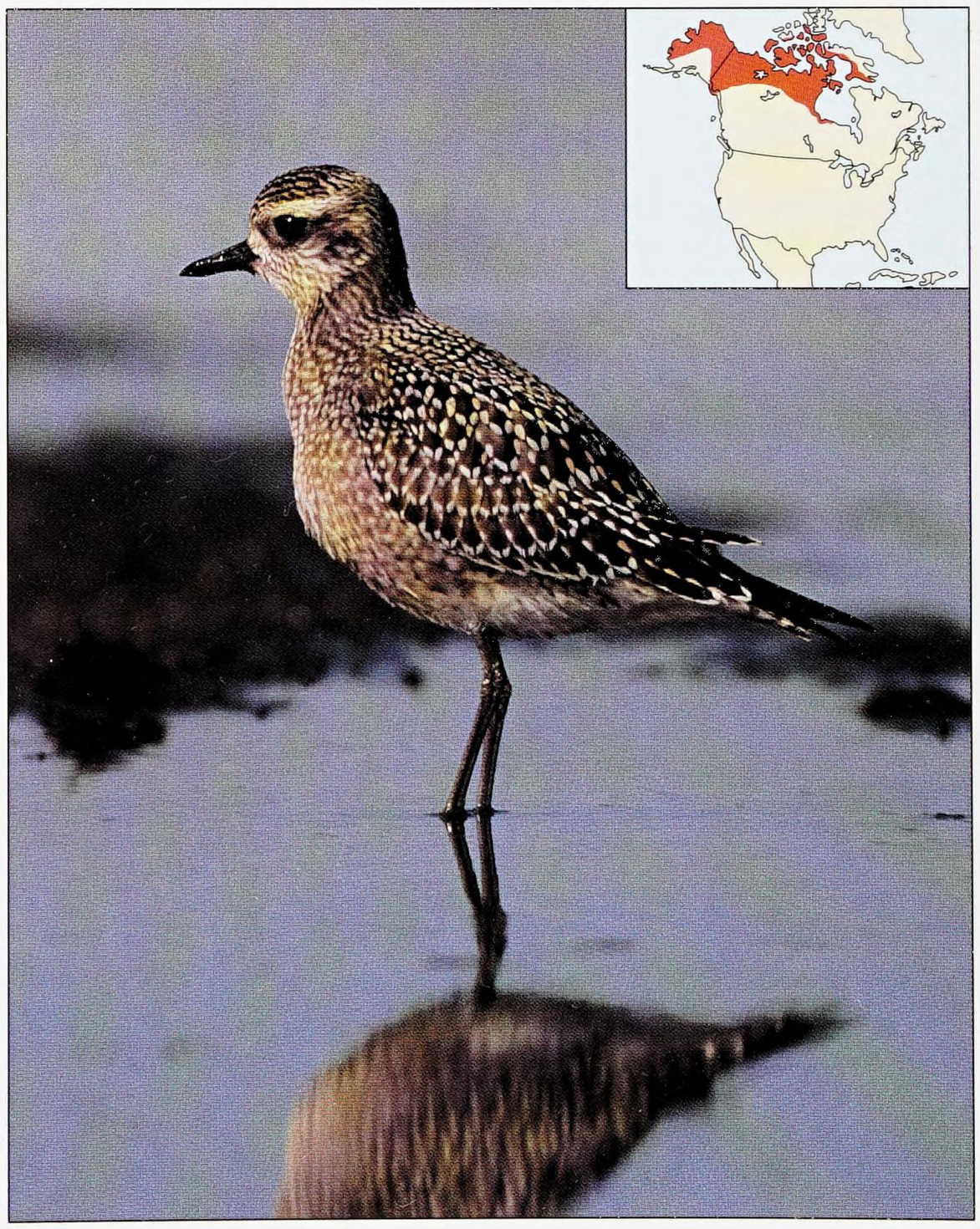
Scientific name: *Pluvialis squatarola*
Length: 11½ inches
Habitat: Arctic tundra, coastal areas, Great Lakes
Identification: Compact, heavy-billed shorebird with white rump and tail, black patch under wing in flight. Summer male has black face, neck, breast and belly, white crown and nape extending to side of breast, black and white mottled back. Summer female less black. Winter adult mottled gray above, pale gray below
Similar species: American Golden Plover smaller, golden spots above in summer, dark wing, rump and tail, lacks dark patch underwing. Sanderling and Red Knot have similar winter plumage, but are much smaller

Spending the summer on Arctic tundra and mostly wintering in the Southern Hemisphere, the Black-bellied Plover is seen along the coasts of North America and round the Great Lakes as it migrates, although a few winter along southern coasts. It nests on tundra, laying 4 buffy eggs in a shallow scrape lined with lichen and moss. Incubation takes up to 28 days, with both birds taking a turn; the chicks leave the nest soon after hatching and are independent by 7 weeks. Adults have a short, thick dark bill, white rump and tail, and a black wing patch beneath that is only seen in flight. The breeding male has a black face, neck, breast and belly, with the white crown and nape extending to the side of the breast, and a black and white mottled back. The summer female (*left*) is similar, but has less black. In winter, both birds are evenly mottled dark-gray above, and pale gray below. The juvenile bird may be quite gold-speckled. The Black-bellied Plover moves over the ground in short staccato runs, taking marine worms, insects and other invertebrates.

American Golden-Plover

Scientific name: *Pluvialis dominica*
Length: 10¼ inches
Habitat: Arctic tundra, farmland, flooded fields
Identification: Compact, thin-billed shorebird. Summer male has black face, neck, breast and belly, white crown and nape extending to side of breast, black and white mottled back with pale gold spots. Summer female less black. Winter adult gray-brown upperparts, pale gray-brown underparts, whitish eyebrow
Similar species: Black-bellied Plover larger, no gold spots above in summer, white rump and tail, dark patch underwing. Winter plumage Mountain Plover has white underwing, black patch on tail

The American Golden-Plover summers on Arctic tundra and mostly winters in South America, passing through the Great Plains as it migrates - sometimes resting on flooded fields. It nests on tundra, laying 4 buff, black-and-brown-spotted eggs in a scrape lined with lichen and moss. Incubation takes up to 27 days, by both birds; the chicks leave the nest soon after hatching. Adults have a small head and bill, and smoky gray beneath the wing in flight. The breeding male has a black face, neck, breast and belly, a white crown and nape extending to the side of the breast, and a black and white mottled back with pale gold spots. The summer female is very similar, but has less black. In winter, both birds are gray-brown above, with pale gray-brown below and a whitish eyebrow (*right*). The American Golden-Plover mainly eats insects and crustaceans.



KILLDEER

Scientific name: *Charadrius vociferus*
Length: 10½ inches
Habitat: Grassy fields, lake and river shores
Identification: Lanky, long-tailed, open-country bird with slender wings. Gray-brown above, underparts white, two black breast bands, pale gray legs and feet, long thin dark bill. Red-orange rump in flight
Similar species: Double breast band is distinctive

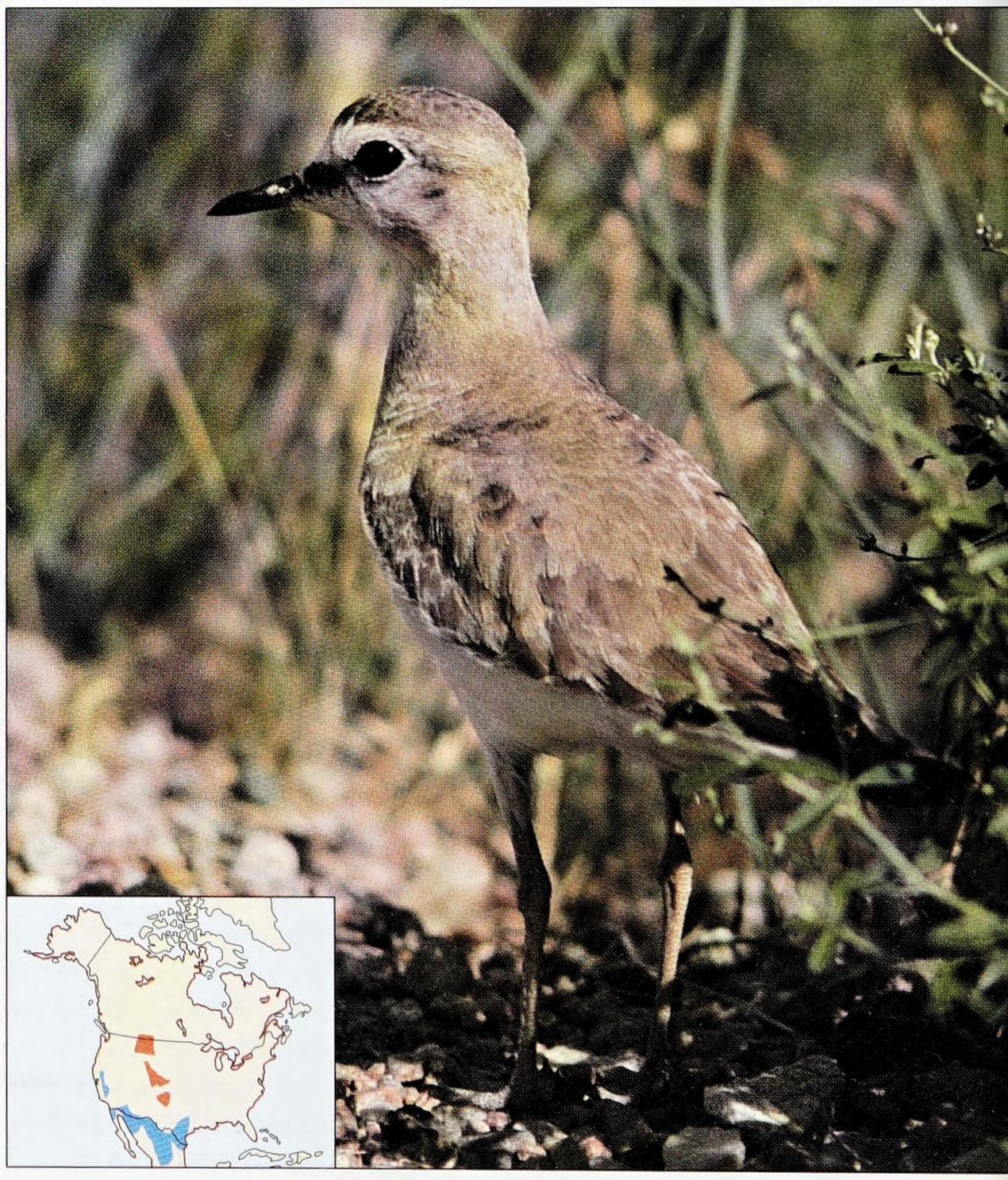
A common bird across much of North America, the Killdeer is found across the south throughout the year and spreads north in summer - although it does not reach the far north. It lives both inland and on the coast, on grassy fields and on lake and river shores. It nests on open ground, usually laying 4 buff eggs spotted with brown in a scrape in gravel or the bare ground, sometimes lined with a few grass stems. Incubation takes around 26 days by both adults. The downy chicks leave the nest soon after hatching and fly within a month; if danger threatens the nest or the chicks, the Killdeer performs a convincing impression of having a broken wing, leading predators away. The adult is a lanky, long-tailed bird with slender wings, pale gray legs and feet and a long thin dark bill. Its plumage is gray-brown above, with white underparts and two distinctive black breast bands. In flight, it has a long red-orange rump, dark tips to the upper wing crossed by a broad white line, white under much of the wing and a dark patch on the tail. The downy chicks have only one breast band, but soon develop a second along with juvenile plumage. The Killdeer feeds in loose flocks, mainly eating earthworms, snails and insects.



MOUNTAIN PLOVER

Scientific name: *Charadrius montanus*
Length: 9 inches
Habitat: Short-grass plains, plowed fields, barren flats
Identification: Long-legged, upland bird. Sandy-brown above, underparts white, pale gray legs and feet, long thin dark bill. Breeding male has black crown, white forehead, black eye line
Similar species: Inhabits different range to shore plovers. Winter plumage American Golden-Plover has grayish underwing in flight and is grayer below

Unlike most of the other North American plovers, the Mountain Plover is found far away from water, on dry grass plains, plowed fields and barren flats - and this different range can be used to distinguish it from other brown-backed plovers. In winter flocks gather across the south; it breeds in several areas further north, but is uncommon and declining as its breeding range is reduced. It does not build a nest but lays 3 olive, black-spotted eggs in a scrape in the ground, that are tended for about 4 weeks by both adults. The downy chicks leave soon after hatching and fly within a month. The adult is a slim bird with long pale gray legs and a long thin dark bill. Its plumage is sandy-brown above, with white underparts and a buff breast. The breeding male has a small black crown, a white forehead, and an indistinct black eye line. In flight, it has dark tips to the upper wing crossed by a white line, white under much of the wing and a dark patch on the tail. The Mountain Plover feeds in small flocks, mainly eating grasshoppers and other insects.



Semipalmated Plover

Scientific name: *Charadrius semipalmatus*
Length: $7\frac{1}{2}$ inches
Habitat: Beaches, lake and tidal flats
Identification: Small, long-legged, long-winged, shore bird. Dark sandy brown above, underparts white, black breast band and eye stripe, white forehead and eyebrow, yellow legs and feet, dark yellow bill with black tip
Similar species: Piping Plover is paler with shorter thick bill. Snowy Plover has paler plumage, thin black bill, gray legs. Wilson's Plover has pinky-gray legs, bigger bill

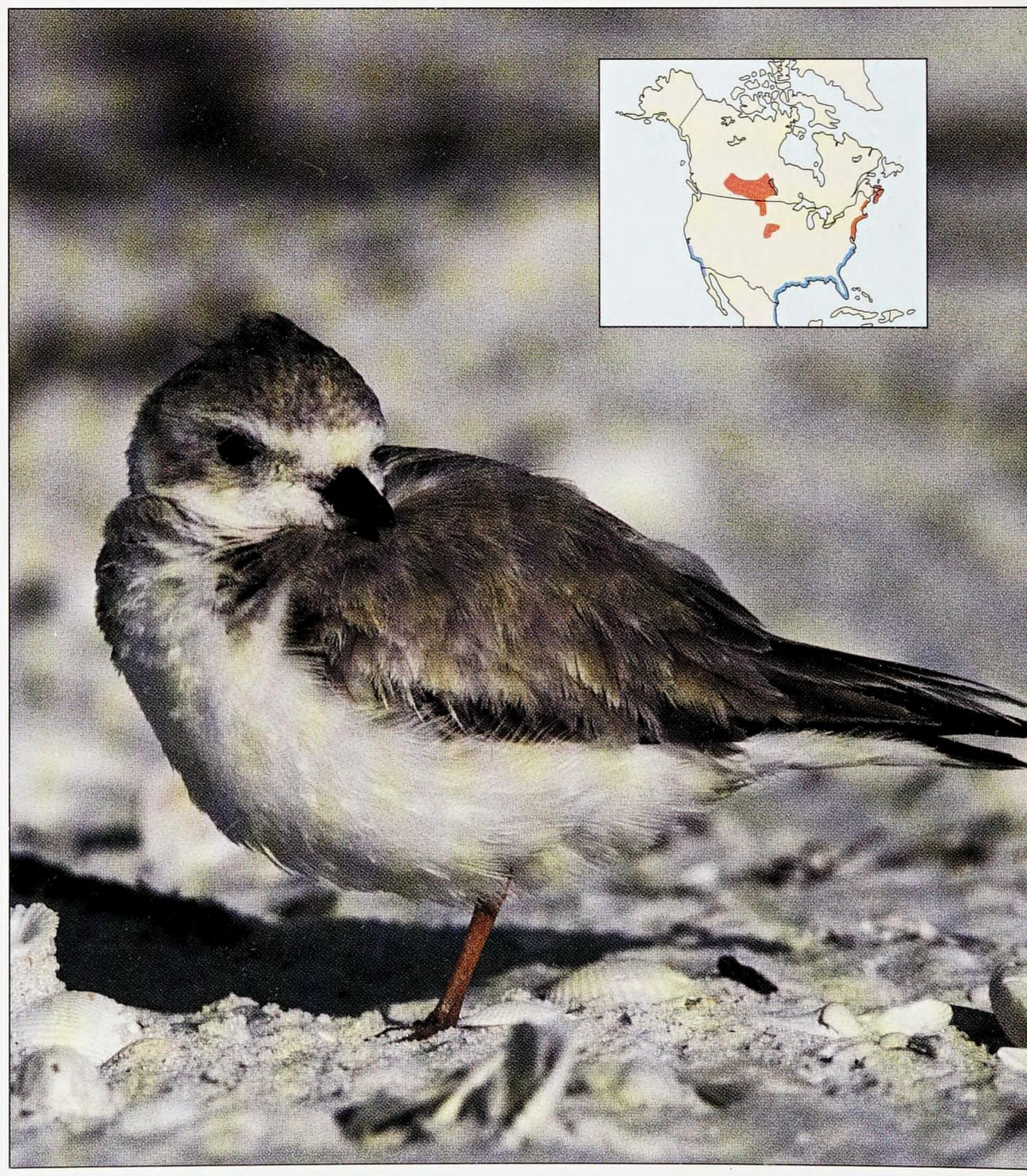
The Semipalmated Plover is the most common of the small plovers and can usually be distinguished by its yellow-orange legs and dark yellow bill with black tip. It is found all across America during spring and fall migration and spends the winter on southern beaches along both coasts. It breeds in the far north, making a scrape in the ground or among beach pebbles, in which it lays 4 buff or whitish eggs that are tended by both adults for around 24 days. The downy chicks leave the nest soon after hatching and are independent within a month. The adult is small, long-legged and long-winged, with yellow-orange legs and dark yellow bill with black tip. Its plumage is dark sandy brown above, with white underparts, a single black breast band and a black eye stripe, and a white forehead and eyebrow. The breeding male often lacks the white eyebrow and the juvenile is similar, but with paler plumage and darker legs. The Semipalmated Plover forages by running quickly, stopping suddenly and making a swift jab to catch a crustacean or insect.

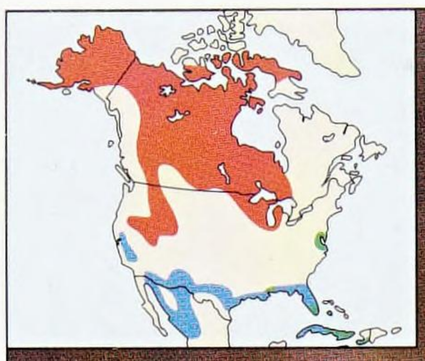


Piping Plover

Scientific name: *Charadrius melodus*
Length: $7\frac{1}{4}$ inches
Habitat: Sandy beaches, dunes, lake shores
Identification: Stocky, long-legged, shore bird. Pale sandy-brown above, underparts white, white forehead and eyebrow, orange legs and feet, short dark bill. Breeding male has orange base to bill, narrow black breast band
Similar species: Semipalmated Plover is darker with longer bill. Snowy Plover has long thin black bill, gray legs. Wilson's Plover has darker plumage, pinky-gray legs, bigger bill

The Piping Plover can usually be distinguished by its pale plumage, orange-yellow legs and stubby bill. It winters on the sandy beaches and mud flats of the southeast coast, and breeds along the north Atlantic coast and on salt flats round northern prairie lakes and rivers. It is generally uncommon and is now an endangered species, with populations declining in all areas. Its nest is a hollow in the sand, in which it lays 4 buff or gray eggs that are incubated for up to a month by both birds. The downy chicks leave the nest soon after hatching and are independent within a month. The adult is stocky, long-legged and relatively short-winged, with a short bill. Its plumage is sandy-brown above, with a white forehead, eyebrow and underparts, and orange legs and feet. The breeding male has an orange bill with a dark tip, a narrow black breast band - sometimes incomplete - and black stripe between the eyes. Its coloring gives the Snowy Plover perfect camouflage on sandy beaches as soon as it stops moving. It mainly eats insects and small crustaceans.





Sandhill Crane

Scientific name:	*Grus canadensis*
Length:	34-42 inches, wingspan 73-90 inches
Habitat:	Tundra, marshes, grasslands
Identification:	Large, long-necked, long-legged wading bird. Gray plumage, sometimes stained rust, bushy tuft of feathers over rump, red patch on head. Flies with neck and head outstretched
Similar species:	Great Blue Heron has longer bill, lacks bushy tuft of feathers over rump, flies with neck folded back

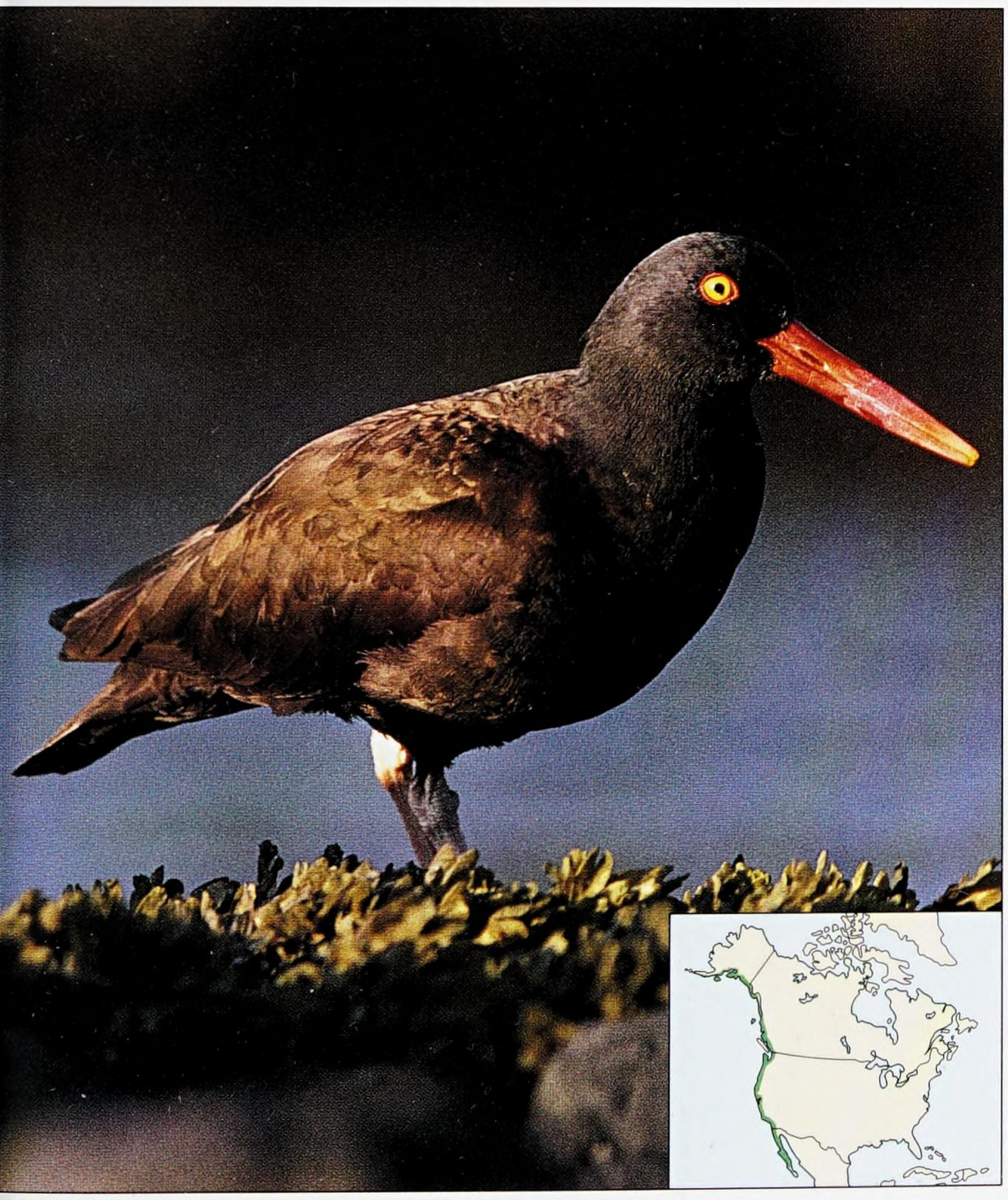
Sandhill Cranes vary in size according to range, with northern birds smallest and southern largest, but they are all tall and stately with very long legs and necks. The species is quite common and is often seen in large flocks of 20-100 birds, spending the winter across the far south and round part of the Gulf coast and the summer in the north. It breeds on Arctic tundra, and also in remote marshes further south, building a large mound of vegetation on which it lays 2 buffy-olive eggs, spotted with reddy-brown. Both parents incubate the eggs, for around one month. The chicks leave the nest soon after hatching and fly at 10 weeks, but remain with the parents until the next spring. The adult has gray plumage, with a bushy tuft of feathers over the rump, and a red patch on the head. Its back and chest feathers are sometimes stained rusty-brown with ferrous mud, transferred there by the bill when preening. The juvenile is grayish with tawny mottling and lacks the red face patch. The Sandhill Crane flies with neck and head outstretched, like other cranes. It eats spilled grain, insects and small animals.

American Oystercatcher

Scientific name: *Haematopus palliatus*
Length: 18½ inches
Habitat: Coastal beaches, mud flats
Identification: Stocky, short-tailed, broad-winged coastal bird. Large red-orange bill, black head, dark brown back, white wing and tail patches, white underparts
Similar species: Bill and plumage distinctive

An exclusively coastal bird, the American Oystercatcher is found on beaches and mud flats along the southern Pacific coast and along most of the Atlantic, where it is still expanding northwards. It can be seen feeding in small, noisy flocks in winter, and in pairs or family groups in the spring and summer. It breeds throughout its range, laying 2-4 greeny-buff spotted eggs in a hollow in the sand that is sometimes lined with bits of plant or odd pebbles. Both parent birds incubate the eggs, for 23-28 days, and the downy young leave the nest soon after hatching and are independent by 5 weeks. The adult bird is stocky, with a short tail and broad wings. Its most distinctive feature is a large red-orange bill, and it has a black head, dark brown back, white wing and tail patches, and white underparts. The juvenile is very similar to the adult, but has some lighter scaling on the back and a dark tip to its bill. When foraging, the large flat bill is used to open oysters and pry limpets off rocks. The American Oystercatcher also eats starfish, crabs and marine worms.





Black Oystercatcher

Scientific name: *Haematopus bachmani*
Length: 17½ inches
Habitat: Rocky shores
Identification: Stocky, short-tailed, broad-winged coastal bird. Large red-orange bill, black plumage
Similar species: Bill and plumage distinctive

The Black and the American Oystercatcher are closely related, but the Black is only found on rocky shores along the Pacific coast. It can be seen in flocks of 40-50 birds in winter, but these break up into pairs at the start of the breeding season. It breeds across its range, laying 2 or 3 large olive-buff eggs blotched with brown among pebbles, or in a shallow rocky depression or a scrape on the beach lined with bits of shell, plant matter or odd pebbles. Both parent birds incubate the eggs, for 24-28 days, and the downy young leave the nest soon after hatching and are independent by around 5 weeks. The adult bird is stocky, with a short tail and broad wings. Its most distinctive feature is a large red-orange bill, and it has entirely black plumage. The juvenile is very similar to the adult, but has some lighter scaling on the back and a dark tip to its bill. The Black Oystercatcher is a very skilled swimmer and is also at home in the air; mating pairs make long courtship flights, twisting and turning, and screeching loudly. It eats oysters, limpets, starfish, crabs and marine worms.



Black-necked Stilt

Scientific name: *Himantopus mexicanus*
Length: 14 inches
Habitat: Shallow wetlands
Identification: Tall, slender, wading bird. Very long spindly reddish legs, black plumage above, white beneath, long thin black bill
Similar species: Unmistakable

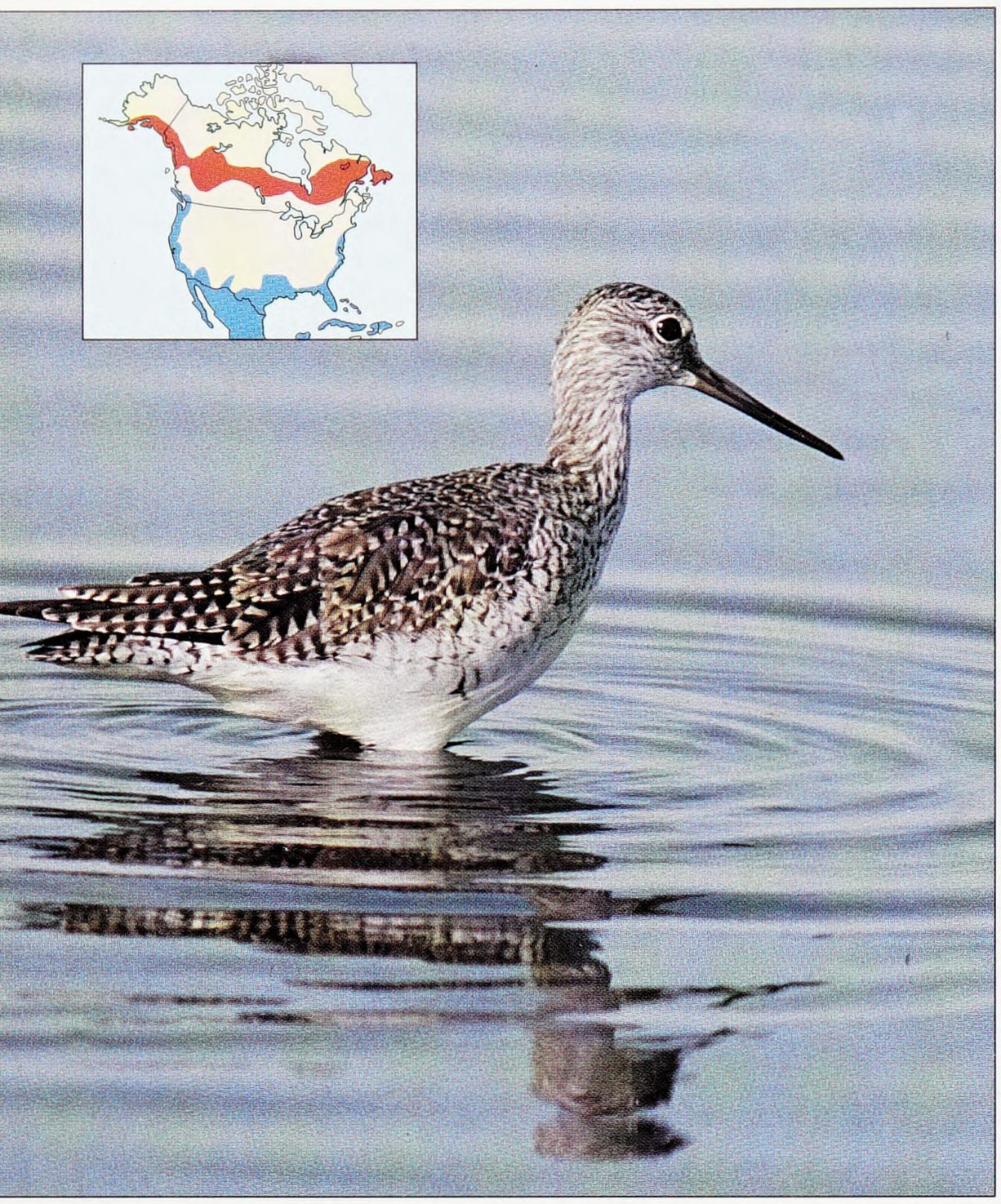
Hunted almost to the point of extinction in the 19th century, the Black-necked Stilt was later protected and has recovered a great deal of ground. It is found in all kinds of wet habitats across much of the south and west, and is often seen in noisy flocks at the water's edge. It needs shallow water for feeding, with adjacent drier ground for breeding. It does not build a nest, but lays around 4 buff eggs spotted with brown in a shallow depression lined with grass and debris on open ground, or in the grass. Intruders near the nesting site are likely to be mobbed by up to 40 noisy, excitable birds. The eggs are incubated for 22-27 days by both parents, and the chicks leave the nest not long after hatching and are independent by around 4-5 weeks. The adult bird is very tall and slender, with very long, thin, reddish legs and a long, thin, black bill. Its plumage is glossy black above and white beneath. The female is somewhat browner, as is the juvenile. The Black-necked Stilt wades through shallows, picking at aquatic insects on the water; it also eats snails.

American Avocet

Scientific name: *Recurvirostra americana*
Length: 18 inches
Habitat: Open shallow ponds and lakes, marshes
Identification: Tall, slender, wading bird. Very long spindly gray legs, black and white back, white beneath, long thin upturned bill, neck cinnamon in summer, gray in winter
Similar species: Unmistakable

The elegant American Avocet is fairly common in the shallow water of ponds and marshes in the west in summer and along the southern coastline in winter; it is only seen across the east during migration. It nests in small groups on open mud flats or in muddy patches in grass, but each pair has its own separate small area. It does not build a nest, but lays around 4 blotched olive eggs in a shallow depression lined with grass. If predators approach, the parents scream loudly to alarm nearby birds, which mob the intruder. The eggs are incubated for 21-28 days by both parents, and the downy chicks leave the nest not long after hatching and are independent by around 5 weeks. The adult bird is very tall and slender, with very long, thin, gray legs and a long, thin, upturned bill - that of the female is more curved than the male. Its plumage is black and white above and white beneath, with a cinnamon-colored neck and head in winter, light gray in summer. The juvenile is black and white with a pale cinnamon wash on the neck. The American Avocet wades through shallows, sweeping its bill from side to side through the water and mud to catch aquatic insects and shrimp-like crustaceans.





Greater Yellowlegs

Scientific name:	*Tringa melanoleuca*
Length:	14 inches
Habitat:	Shallow waters, swamps
Identification:	Tall, slender, long-necked wading bird. Long, bright yellow legs, gray-brown overall, black and white mottling above, white below, white rump, barred tail, long slightly upturned bill
Similar species:	Almost identical to Lesser Yellowlegs, but larger; size difference only noticeable when birds are together

A large sandpiper, the Greater Yellowlegs is fairly common across its range. It winters in the south and summers in the north, and is seen migrating between the two in spring and fall. It breeds in northern swamps, the taiga and damp boreal forests, laying up to 4 gray-white or buffy eggs splotched with brown in a shallow scrape in woodland - often far from water. The eggs are incubated by the female, for around 3 weeks; the young leave the nest soon after hatching and are independent in around 20 days. The adult is a tall, slender bird with a long, slightly upturned bill. Its plumage is gray-brown overall, with black and white mottling above, white below, a white rump and a barred tail; on dry land it can usually be distinguished by its long, bright yellow legs. In breeding plumage, its throat and breast are heavily streaked, its back is darker and more heavily marked and its flanks are barred with black. In winter, Greater Yellowlegs are found in flocks with other wading birds around the southern coasts and on the muddy shores of inland lakes. It wades into deeper water than some others, sweeping the water with its bill to catch invertebrates or stabbing small fish. It also eats aquatic insects and their larvae, and water snails.

Solitary Sandpiper

Scientific name:	*Tringa solitaria*
Length:	$8\frac{1}{2}$ inches
Habitat:	Shallow backwaters, estuaries, wooded ponds, bogs, boreal forests
Identification:	Slender, short-necked wading bird. Dark gray back with white spotting, white eye ring, long straight bill, white below, greenish legs. In flight has tail with dark center and white cross-barred sides
Similar species:	Spotted Sandpiper is paler, with less obvious eye ring. Yellowlegs are bigger and leg coloring is distinctive

A rather uncommon bird, the Solitary Sandpiper is rarely seen in flocks but usually alone at the edges of creeks, ponds or shallow backwaters. It winters in Central and South America, but migrates across North America to breed in the boggy coniferous forests of the far north. Unlike other sandpipers it does not lay its eggs on the ground, but takes over an old songbird nest high in a tree. It lays 4 pale green or buffy eggs heavily blotched with brown, which are incubated by the female for around 22-24 days; the young leave the nest soon after hatching but stay with the female for some time. The adult is slender, with a short neck, a thin straight bill and greenish legs. Its plumage is mainly dark gray, with white spotting on the back, a distinct white eye ring, and white below. In flight, its upper tail has a dark center and dark-gray and white cross-barred sides. In breeding plumage, its throat and breast are streaked and its back is darker and more strongly marked. The Solitary Sandpiper often shakes one foot rapidly underwater to bring food up out of the mud. It eats insects, spiders, crustaceans and small aquatic animals.





Lesser Yellowlegs

Scientific name:	*Tringa flavipes*
Length:	$10\frac{1}{2}$ inches
Habitat:	Tundra, woodland, shallow freshwater ponds, coastal marshes
Identification:	Tall, slender, long-necked wading bird. Long, bright yellow legs, gray-brown overall, black and white mottling above, white below, white rump, barred tail, long straight bill
Similar species:	Amost identical to Greater Yellowlegs, but smaller; size difference only noticeable when birds are together

The Lesser Yellowlegs is common across most of its range, but is seen rather less in the far west. It is found in the same sort of places as the Greater Yellowlegs, but its summer range does not extend as far to the east and its winter range is smaller. It breeds in northern swamps, the taiga and damp boreal forests, laying up to 4 buffy eggs splotched with brown in a shallow depression on bare ground lined with plant material - quite often far from water. The eggs are incubated by the female only for around 3 weeks; the young are ready to leave the nest soon after hatching and are fully independent in around 21 days. The adult is quite a tall, slender bird, with a long neck, a straight bill and long, bright yellow legs. Its plumage is gray-brown overall, with black and white mottling above, white below, a white rump and a barred tail. In breeding plumage, its throat and breast are heavily streaked, its back is darker and more heavily marked and its flanks have short, fine black bars. The Lesser Yellowlegs is often found in small flocks and bobs its head and body when alarmed. It wades in shallow water, picking at the surface to snap up small invertebrates and aquatic insects and their larvae.



Wandering Tattler *(above)*

Scientific name:	*Heteroscelus incanus*
Length:	11 inches
Habitat:	Gravel stream banks, rocky coasts
Identification:	Medium-size, bobbing, shore bird. Short yellow legs, dark gray above, gray wash on breast and throat, pale belly, dark eye line with paler patch above, long dark bill. Breeding bird has fine black barring below
Similar species:	Bobs like Spotted Sandpiper but has very different coloring

The Wandering Tattler is found only along the Pacific coast of America - in winter on rocky beaches in the south and in summer along mountain streams further to the north. It is often seen mingling with the other shorebirds that prefer rocky terrain, but may be easier to approach since it does not fear human contact. It breeds on the banks or bars of gravelly streams, laying 4 greenish eggs lightly spotted with brown in a carefully built nest of roots and twigs, lined with leaves. Its nesting habits have only recently been fully studied, as the first nest was only discovered in 1922. The eggs are incubated by both birds, which takes around 3 weeks; the young are ready to leave the nest within a few days after hatching. The adult is of medium size for a sandpiper, with short, dull yellow legs and a dark bill that is somewhat longer than its head. Its plumage is dark gray above, with a pale gray wash on the throat and breast and a pale belly, and it has a dark eye line with a paler eyebrow above. The breeding bird has strong black barring below. Although several Tattlers may spend the winter foraging on the same stretch of beach, each feeds alone, teetering and bobbing as it moves along. It eats insect larvae, mollusks and marine worms.

Spotted Sandpiper

Scientific name:	*Actitis macularia*
Length:	$7\frac{1}{2}$ inches
Habitat:	Streams, ponds, lakes, marshes
Identification:	Short-necked, long-tailed wading bird. Olive-brown back and wash on sides of breast, light eye stripe, white eye ring, white below, flesh-colored legs. Breeding bird large round black spots below
Similar species:	Bobbing walk is unmistakable and breeding plumage is distinctive. Winter Solitary Sandpiper is darker, has more distinct eye ring, lacks white upperwing stripe seen in flight

The Spotted Sandpiper is a common bird, widespread across much of North America in summer and spending the winter in the far south and down into South America. It is usually seen singly rather than in flocks, on the edges of coastal mud flats, in marshes and along streams and ponds. When moving across the ground, it has a distinctive bobbing, teetering walk. It lays up to 4 greeny or buffy eggs in a depression in the ground near water. These are incubated for around 21-24 days - often by the male bird only; the young are ready to leave the nest soon after hatching and are fully independent by 3 weeks. The adult is a short-necked bird with a rather long tail and flesh-colored legs. It has an olive-brown back, which extends down as a wash on the sides of the breast, a light eye stripe and white eye ring, and is white below. In breeding plumage, the mature bird has very distinctive large, round, black spots on its underparts. The Spotted Sandpiper flies with stiff, shallow wingbeats and shows a short white stripe on the upper wing. It eats insects, small fish and crustaceans.

WILLET

Scientific name:	*Catoptrophorus semipalmatus*
Length:	15 inches
Habitat:	Wetlands, coastal beaches, marshes
Identification:	Bulky, long-legged, long-billed wading bird. Light sand-gray back, white below, gray legs. Breeding adult heavily mottled. In flight has striking black and white wings
Similar species:	Larger and stockier than most other sandpipers

Found in many habitats, the Willet is a noisy bird that is seen in small flocks or singly on beaches. It winters in the south along both North American coasts, but spends the summer only along the Atlantic and Gulf coasts, and in some areas in the west. It breeds in wetlands, laying 3 or 4 spotted buffy eggs in a cup made of grass or in an unlined scrape in the ground. These are incubated for around 21-30 days by both parent birds; the young are ready to leave the nest soon after hatching, but are looked after by the female until they are ready to fend for themselves. The adult is plump and bulky, with long, thick, gray legs and a rather long, stout, gray bill. It has a plain, light sand-gray back, and is white below, but the breeding adult is heavily mottled. In flight, it has very striking wings, with a black patch and trailing edge, separated by a broad white band. When disturbed, it flashes these wings at predators to startle them. The Willet feeds in small flocks, but the birds are quite widely spaced. It eats insects, small marine animals and seeds.





Long-billed Curlew

Scientific name:	*Numenius americanus*
Length:	23 inches
Habitat:	Wetlands, coastal mud flats, dry grasslands
Identification:	Large, shore bird with very long downcurved bill. Cinnamon brown with dark mottling above, buff below, in flight has cinnamon underwings
Similar species:	Very long downcurved bill and cinnamon underwings are distinctive

The largest of the North American sandpipers, the Long-billed Curlew is found mainly in the west. It spends the winter on coastal mud flats and farmland and the summer on drier grassland further inland. A social bird, it spends much of its time in flocks, except in the breeding season when it becomes very territorial. It avoids cover and nests in the open, laying up to 4 olive, brown-spotted eggs in a depression lined with grasses. These are incubated for around 26-29 days by both adults; the young leave the nest soon after hatching and are fully independent within 7 weeks. The adult is very large, with an extremely long, very downcurved bill. Its plumage is cinnamon brown with dark mottling above, and buff below. In flight, it has cinnamon underwings. The juvenile has the same coloring but a slightly shorter bill. The Long-billed Curlew walks steadily when it is foraging, reaching ahead with its long bill to pick up food or to probe with the tip for insects and small aquatic animals.

Upland Sandpiper

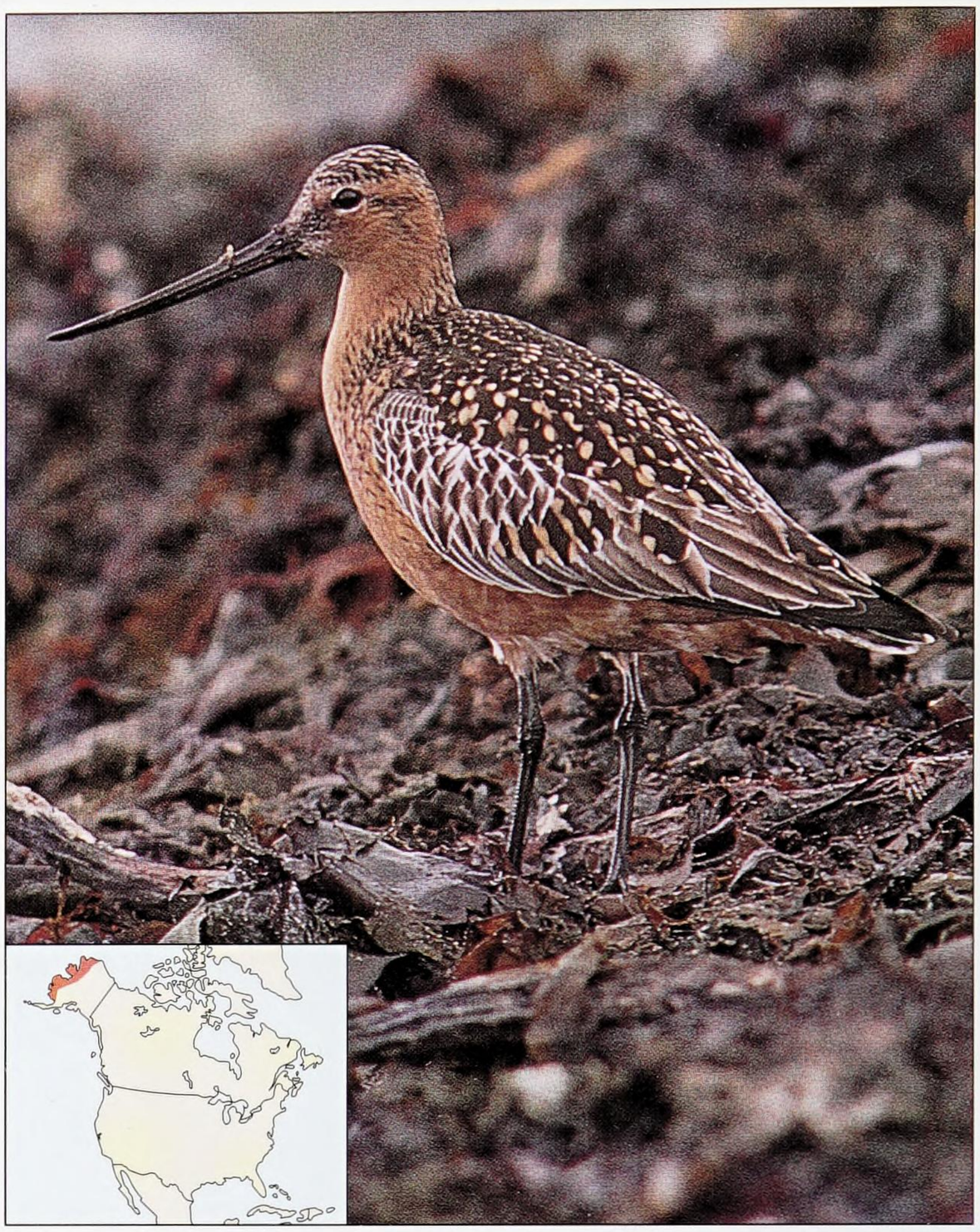
Scientific name:	*Bartramia longicauda*
Length:	12 inches
Habitat:	Open grassland
Identification:	Long-necked, long-tailed meadowland bird. Mottled brown-black above, whitish below, yellow legs, short bill, large dark eyes
Similar species:	Short bill and long thin neck distinctive

Formerly known as the Upland Plover, the Upland Sandpiper is a meadowland bird that prefers long grass - often only its head can be seen poking up above the stems. It winters in South America, but was once widespread across much of North America in summer, until indiscriminate slaughtering in the late 19th century brought it to the edge of extinction. After protection laws were passed, populations recovered and it is now fairly common within its range. It nests in tall grass at the edge of clearings, laying up to 4 cream or buffy eggs in a hollow lined with grasses. These are incubated for just over 3 weeks by both parent birds; the young leave the nest soon after hatching and are fully independent within 4 weeks. The adult has a small head with large dark eyes set on a long, thin neck, a short bill, dull yellow legs and a very long tail for a sandpiper. Its plumage is heavily mottled brown-black above, and plain whitish below. The Upland Sandpiper often pauses with its wings raised after landing, and can be seen perched on fence posts in its breeding area. It mainly eats insects and grass seeds.



Bar-tailed Godwit

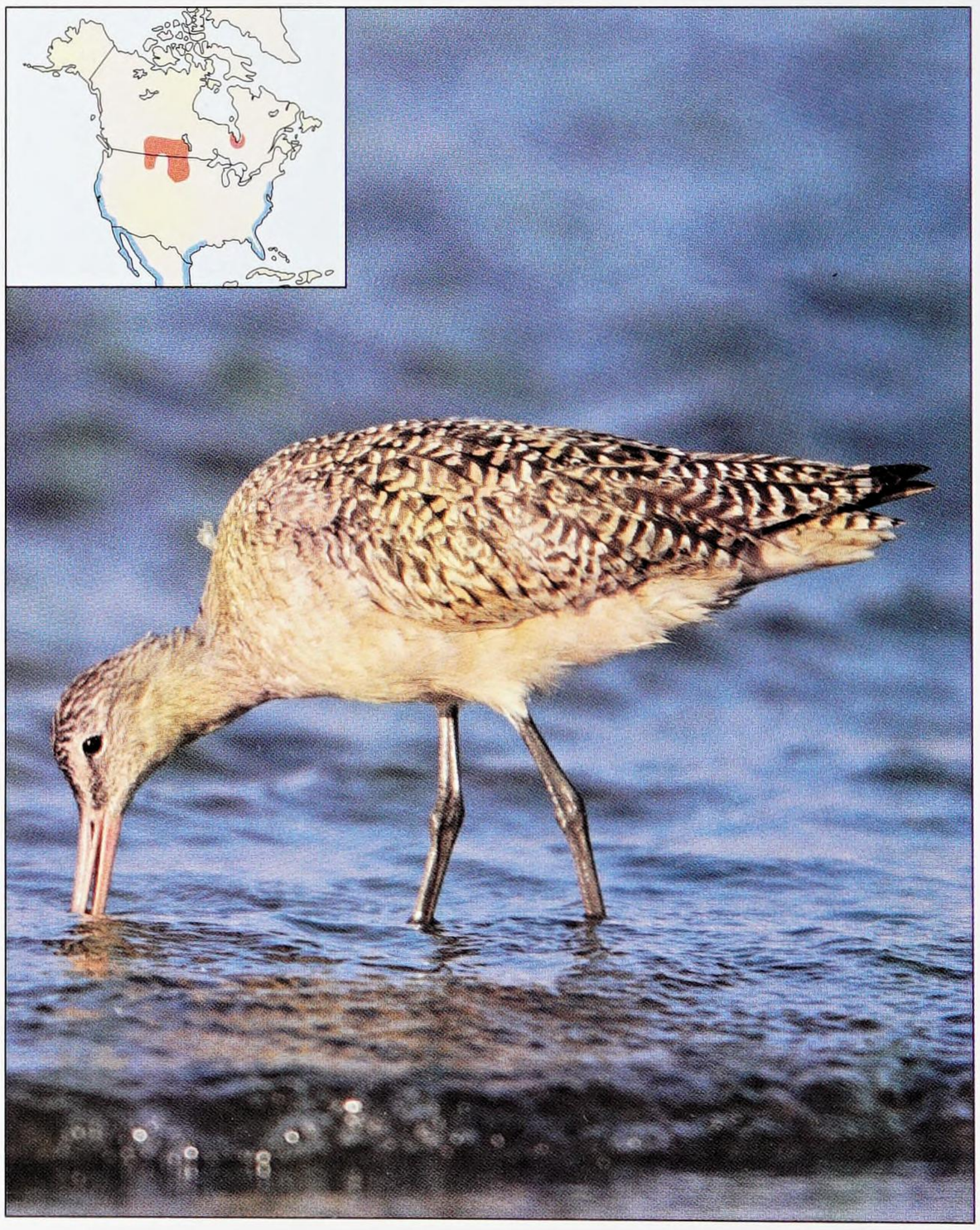
Scientific name: *Limosa lapponica*
Length: 16 inches
Habitat: Open tundra, beaches, coastal mud flats
Identification: Medium-size shore bird with long slightly upturned bill. Breeding adult has a dark back with cinnamon patterning, plain chestnut below and on head and neck. Winter birds streaked brown-gray above, whitish below. All plumages, white rump and white cross-barred tail
Similar species: In winter resembles Marbled Godwit, but lacks warm brown tone, bill and legs are shorter



Only found in Alaska, the Bar-tailed Godwit spends the summer on tundra and migrates to the Old World for the winter, although a few strays find their way along the northwest Pacific coast. It breeds on tundra marshes, laying 4 greeny eggs with brown spots in a scantily-lined hollow. These are incubated by both adults; the young leave the nest soon after hatching and are independent within about a month. The adult has long legs and a long, slightly upturned, pinkish bill with a darker tip. The breeding adult has a dark back with cinnamon and light patterning, and is plain bright chestnut below and on the head and neck. Winter birds are streaked brown-gray above, and whitish below. The female is larger than the male and paler in coloring. In flight, all birds show a white rump, a white cross-barred tail and pointed wings with cross-barred linings. The Bar-tailed Godwit wades in open water, probing with its bill to find crustaceans, mollusks and worms.

Marbled Godwit

Scientific name: *Limosa fedoa*
Length: 18 inches
Habitat: Tidal flats, grassy marshes, shallow pools
Identification: Medium-size, long-legged shore bird with long slightly upturned bill. Breeding adult is warm tawny-brown mottled with black above and barred below. Winter birds mottled above, plain buffy-brown below. All plumages, cinnamon wing linings
Similar species: In winter resembles Bar-tailed Godwit, but is a warmer brown tone, bill and legs are longer



The Marbled Godwit is more widespread than the other North American godwits; it is commonly seen in flocks on the beaches of the Pacific coast in winter and is also found around the Gulf and along the southeast coast. It spends the summer breeding season on the northern prairies, laying 4 greeny-buff eggs in a scrape concealed in grass near water. These are incubated for around 3 weeks; the young leave the nest soon after hatching and are independent within about 21 days. The adult has long legs and a long, slightly upturned, flesh-pink bill with a darker tip. The breeding adult is an even warm tawny-brown all over, mottled with black above and barred below. Winter birds and juveniles are mottled above and plain buffy-brown below. In flight, all birds show cinnamon wing linings and along the trailing edge of upper wings. The Marbled Godwit stands on flooded mud flats and in marshes, probing the mud with its bill to find crustaceans, mollusks and worms.



Hudsonian Godwit

Scientific name:	*Limosa haemastica*
Length:	15½ inches
Habitat:	Grassy marshes, beaches, mud flats, shallow pools
Identification:	Medium-size shore bird with long slightly upturned bill. Breeding adult is mottled brown above, chestnut below finely barred with black. Winter birds gray above and on breast, whitish belly
Similar species:	Dark wing linings and narrow white wing stripe are distinctive in flight

The smallest of the Godwits, the Hudsonian is an uncommon sandpiper that spends the summer in a few scattered areas in the north and migrates in flocks through central North America on its way to wintering grounds in South America. Its nest is a hollow concealed in grass and lined with leaves, in which it lays 4 olive-green, brown-spotted eggs. These are incubated for just over 3 weeks by both adults; the young leave the nest a day or so after hatching and are fully independent within one month. The adult has a typical godwit bill - long, slightly upturned, pinky-yellow with a darker tip. The breeding adult is mottled brown above and rich chestnut below, finely barred with black. The female has the same coloring, but is larger and paler. Winter birds and juveniles are gray above and on the breast, with a whitish belly. In flight, the Hudsonian Godwit has pointed wings with black linings and a white stripe, and a black tail contrasting with its white rump. It probes with its bill to find crustaceans, mollusks, worms and insects.



Black Turnstone

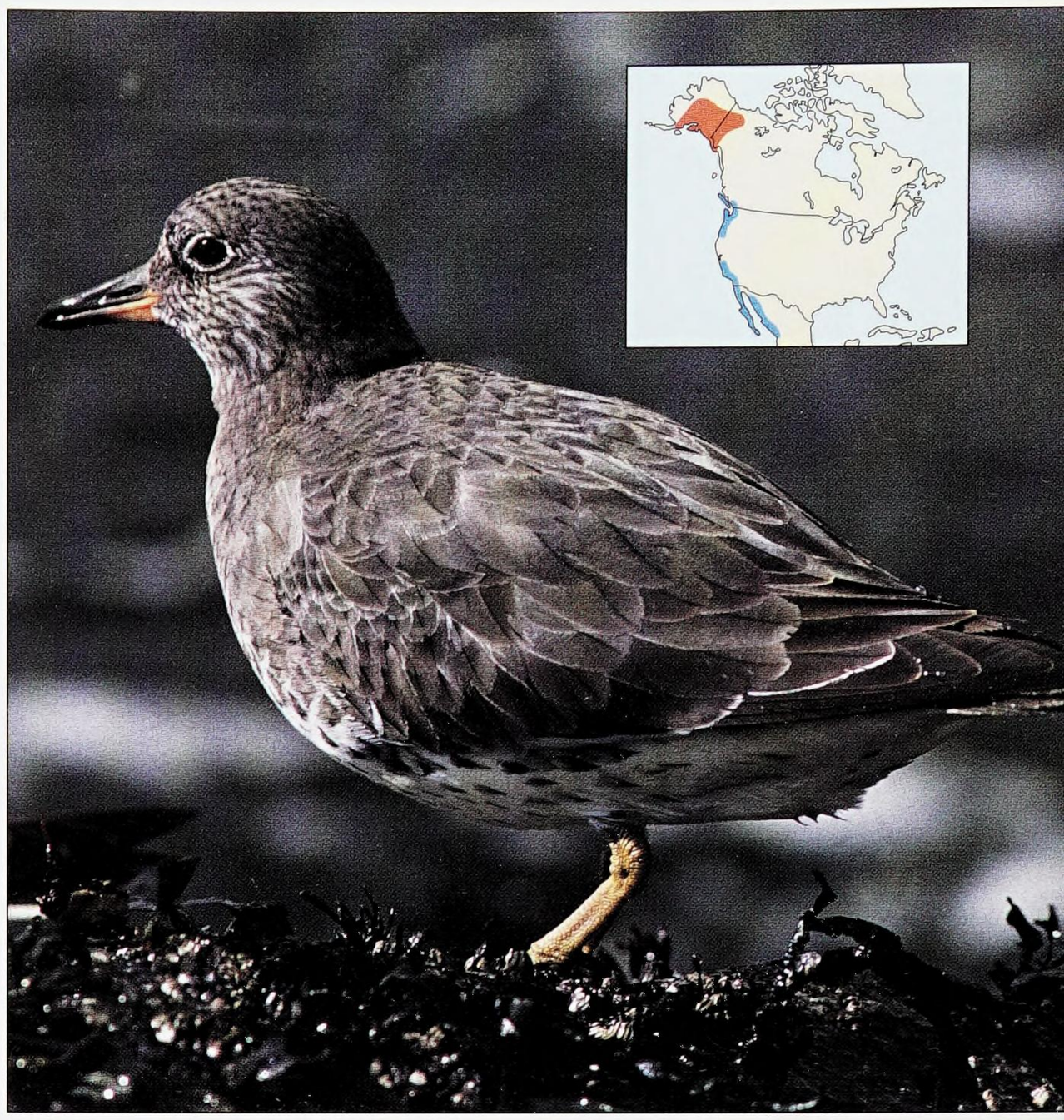
Scientific name:	*Arenaria melanocephala*
Length:	$9\frac{1}{4}$ inches
Habitat:	Rocky coasts, mud flats, tundra
Identification:	Small, short-legged shore bird with short pointed bill. Breeding adult has black above and on breast, with large white spot before the eye, white line above eye, white spotting on sides of neck and breast, white belly. Winter birds plain black above and on breast, white belly. In flight, wings boldly patterned in black and white
Similar species:	In winter, darker than Ruddy Turnstone, Surfbird and Rock Sandpiper

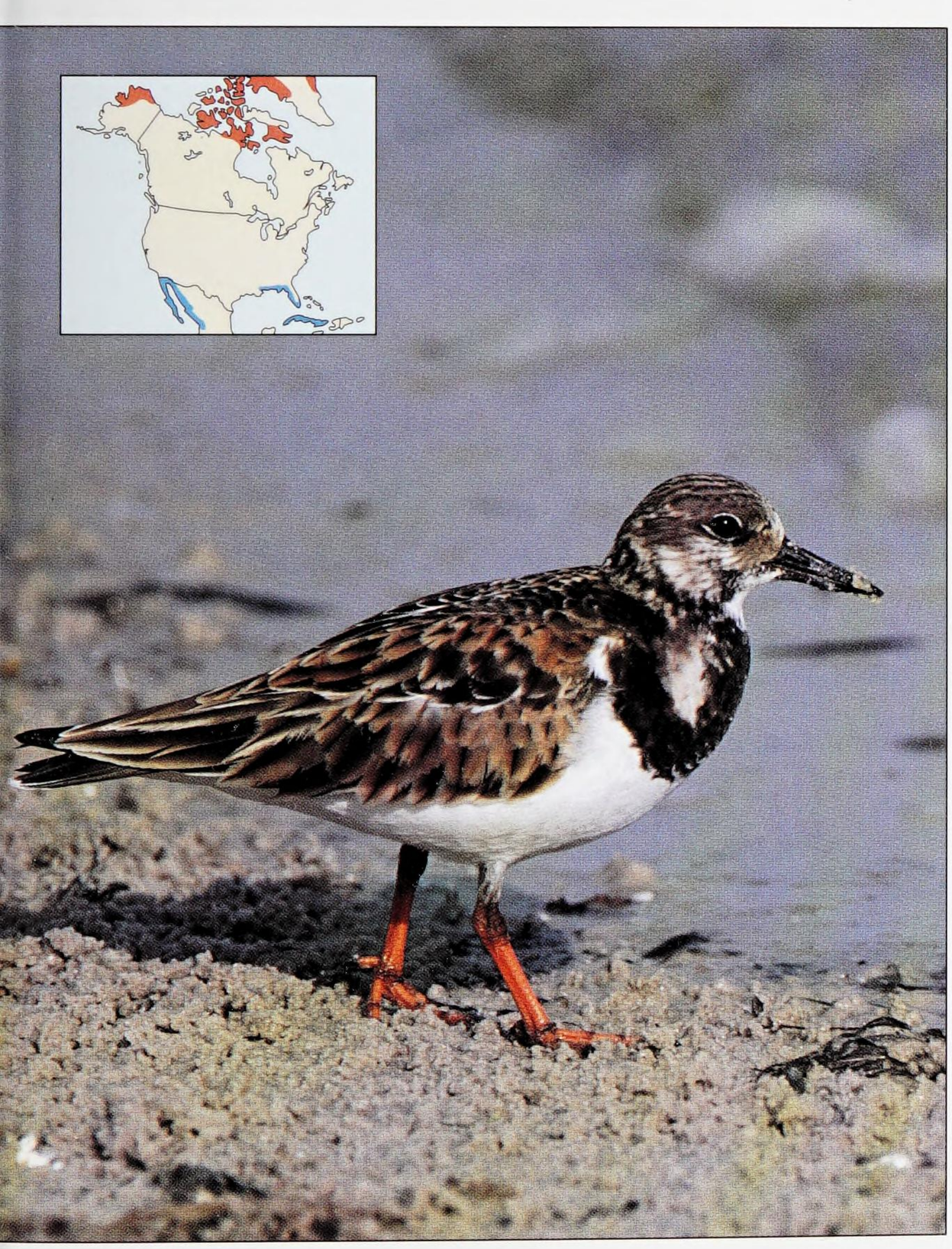
Although it is most never seen inland, the Black Turnstone is seen all along the west coast in winter and spends the summer in northwest Alaska. It breeds on the wet tundra of the Alaskan coast, laying 4 yellow-olive eggs with darker markings in a scrape on pebbly ground or on a gravel bar. These are incubated for around 3 weeks by both adult birds; the young leave the nest quite soon after hatching. The adult is a small, short-legged bird with a relatively short, pointed bill. In its breeding plumage it is black above and on the breast, with a large white spot before the eye, a white line above the eye, white spotting on the sides of neck and breast, and a white belly. Winter birds are black above and on the breast without the white markings, and have a white belly. The juvenile resembles the winter adult. In flight, the wings are boldly patterned in black and white above and clean white below. Like the Ruddy Turnstone, the Black flips over pebbles, rocks and seaweed with its bill to find the crustaceans, mollusks and worms hidden underneath. It is only territorial during the summer breeding season, during the rest of the year it is generally found in small flocks.

Surfbird

Scientific name: *Aphriza virgata*
Length: 10 inches
Habitat: Rocky beaches, mountain tundra
Identification: Stocky, short-legged shore bird with stout bill. Breeding adult is gray above and white beneath, with rufous wing patch, all heavily spotted and streaked with brown-black. Winter birds dark gray above and on breast, white belly. In flight, white rump and tail with broad black tip
Similar species: In winter, lighter than Black Turnstone

The Surfbird is seen on rocky beaches all along the west coast in winter and spends the summer in the mountains of Alaska and northwest Canada. It breeds above the timberline on mountain tundra, laying 4 buffy eggs spotted with other colors among rocks. These are incubated by both adult birds; the young leave the nest soon after hatching. The adult is a stocky bird, with short yellow legs and a stout yellow bill with a dark tip. The breeding adult is gray above and white beneath, with a rufous wing patch, all heavily spotted and streaked with brown-black. Winter birds are plain dark gray above and on the breast, with a white belly. In flight, it shows a white rump and tail with a broad black tip.The juvenile resembles the winter adult, but has some white scaling. In flight, the wings have a white stripe on gray above and are white marked with gray below. The Surfbird uses its stout bill to prise mollusks off rocks; it also eats crustaceans and insects.





Ruddy Turnstone

Scientific name: *Arenaria interpres*
Length: $9\frac{1}{2}$ inches
Habitat: Rocky coasts, beaches, mud flats, Great Lakes
Identification: Small, short-legged shore bird with short pointed bill. Breeding adult is white with orange-red back, black patterning on chest and face, bright orange legs and feet, white tail with broad black band. Winter birds dark brown streaked with black above, white below. In flight, wings boldly patterned in black, white and rust
Similar species: Unmistakable in summer plumage. In winter, wing patterning distinguishes it from similar plovers and sandpipers

Although rarely seen inland, the Ruddy Turnstone is commonly seen along the coast in winter and during migration; it prefers rocks, but is also found on beaches and mud flats. It spends the summer on the coastal shores of Alaska, establishing a territory and laying 4 grayish-green spotted eggs in a scantily-lined scrape on open ground near water. These are incubated for around 3 weeks by both adult birds; the young leave the nest soon after hatching and are independent within about 21 days. The adult is a small, short-legged bird with a short, pointed bill. In its distinctive breeding plumage it is white with an orange-red back marked with black, black and white patterning on the chest and face, bright orange legs and feet, and a white tail with a broad black band. Winter birds are dark brown streaked with black above, and white below. The female is somewhat duller than the male and the juvenile resembles the winter adult, but its back is scaled rather than streaked. In flight, the wings are boldly patterned in black, white and rust. When feeding, the Ruddy Turnstone flips over pebbles, rocks and seaweed with its bill to find crustaceans, mollusks and worms - but it will also eat almost everything else edible it finds.



Least Sandpiper

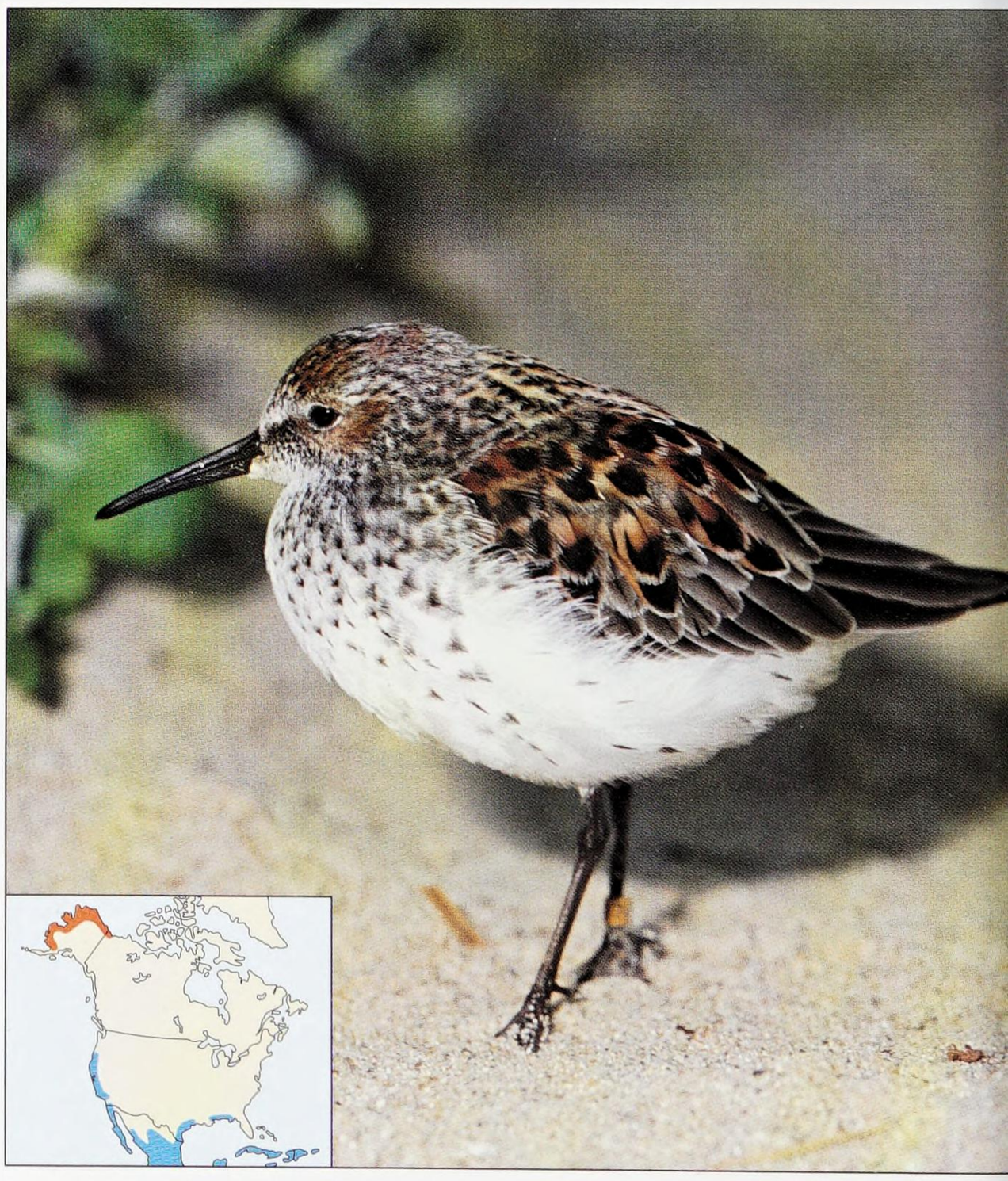
Scientific name: *Calidris minutilla*
Length: 6 inches
Habitat: Rivers, ponds, marshes
Identification: Small, yellow-legged bird. Breeding adult has mottled warm brown-gray on back, head and upper breast sometimes tinged rufous, white belly. Winter birds gray above, white below
Similar species: Easily confused with Western and Semipalmated sandpipers, but has yellow legs and is darker above in all plumages

Slightly smaller than the Western and Semipalmated, the Least Sandpiper is more widespread than either. It is the sandpiper seen most often inland in spring and fall across much of North America, as it migrates from its breeding ground in the north to spend the winter in the south or in South America. It spends the summer across Arctic tundra, where it lays 4 pale buff, brown-marked eggs in a depression scantily lined with leaves or grass, or in a scrape in boggy tundra. These are incubated by both birds for around 21 days; the young leave the nest soon after hatching. The adult is small with a short, thin black bill slightly down-curved at the tip and yellow legs and feet. In breeding plumage it is mottled in warm brown-gray on the back, head and upper breast, often with a rusty tint, and has white flanks and belly. Winter birds are gray-brown above and on the chest, and white below. The juveniles are similar to the adult, but more rufous. The Least Sandpiper is often seen foraging for marine animals and aquatic insects with Semipalmated and Baird's sandpipers and it is very difficult to tell them apart at a distance. Sandpipers in general are commonly known as "peeps".

Western Sandpiper

Scientific name: *Calidris mauri*
Length: 6½ inches
Habitat: Coastal flats
Identification: Small shore bird, black bill decurved at tip. Breeding adult has mottled warm brown-gray above, rusty red on shoulders, crown and ear, white belly with heavy arrow-shaped spotting. Winter birds gray above, white below
Similar species: In summer plumage, Semipalmated Sandpiper lacks spotting on belly. In winter easily confused with Semipalmated and Least sandpipers

The Western Sandpiper is the west American equivalent of the Semipalmated Sandpiper, and the two birds are very similar. The Western is also seen migrating in large flocks across much of North America, but it breeds on the coastal tundra of Alaska in the northwest and into Siberia and winters along the southwest and southeast coasts. It lays 4 creamy eggs with red-brown markings in a scrape on dry ground, which are incubated by both birds for around 20 days; the young leave the nest soon after hatching and are independent within 2-3 weeks. The adult is small and rather plump, with a longish black bill, slightly curved down at the tip, and black legs and feet. In breeding plumage it is mottled brown-gray above, with rust-red on the shoulders, crown and ear, and a white belly with heavy arrow-shaped spots. Winter birds are gray above and whitish below. The juveniles have a darkish cap, pale face and breast, an indistinct white eye-brow and rufous on the shoulder. The Western Sandpiper wades more than some other sandpipers, foraging for marine animals and aquatic insects.





SANDERLING

Scientific name:	*Calidris alba*
Length:	8 inches
Habitat:	Sandy beaches
Identification:	Small, plump, short-billed shore bird. Breeding adult has mottled gray-white-rust on back, head and upper breast, white belly. Winter birds light gray above, white below. In flight, white wing stripe
Similar species:	In winter plumage, distinguished from pale plovers by longer bill, paler than Western Sandpiper

A small and pale sandpiper, the Sanderling is seen in small flocks in winter along both coasts, running up and down the beach dodging the waves. It spends the short summer breeding period on tundra in the far north and Eurasia. Its nest is a grass-lined hollow, well concealed on dry ground, in which it lays up to 4 olive eggs lightly spotted with brown. These are incubated by both birds for around 25-30 days; the young leave the nest soon after hatching and are independent within only 17 days. The adult is small and plump, with a short black bill and black legs. In breeding plumage it is mottled in gray, white and rust on the back, head and upper breast, and has a white belly. Winter birds are very pale light gray above, sometimes showing a black smudgy patch on the shoulder, and white below. In flight, it shows a distinct white wing stripe.The juvenile has a darker back than the winter adult, with some white scaling. The Sanderling rushes about the beach, keeping just ahead of the waves, picking up mollusks and crustaceans exposed by the surf.



Pectoral Sandpiper

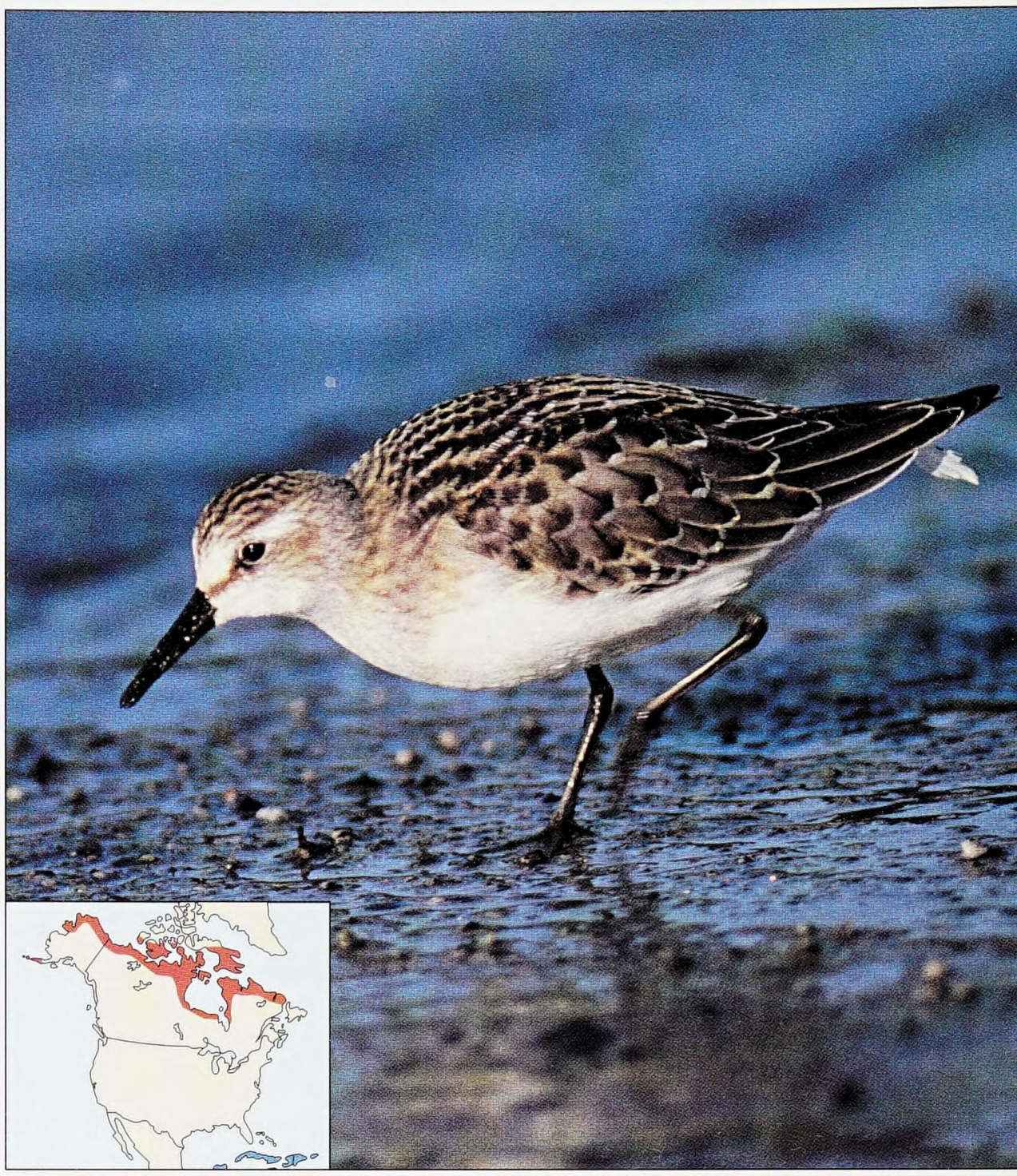
Scientific name:	*Calidris melanotos*
Length:	$8\frac{3}{4}$ inches
Habitat:	Marshes, grassy mudflats, wet fields
Identification:	Small, yellow-legged, long-winged bird. Breeding adult mottled warm brown-gray on back, head and upper breast, sharply defined white belly. Winter birds gray above, white below
Similar species:	Easily confused with Least Sandpiper, but is larger and has longer wings

Slightly larger than the Least, the Pectoral Sandpiper is very similar in coloring and is also more often seen inland than on the coast. Its breeding grounds are in the far north and it migrates in spring and fall across central North America, on its way to spend the winter in South America. It spends the summer across Arctic tundra in Siberia, and from northwest Alaska to Hudson Bay. There it breeds and lays 4 greenish or buff, brown-marked eggs in a scrape in the grass, which are incubated by the female for around 21 days; the young leave the nest soon after hatching and are independent within 3 weeks. The adult is small with a short, thin black bill slightly down-curved at the tip and yellowish legs and feet. In breeding plumage it is mottled in warm brown-gray on the back, head and breast, the dense streaking of the upper breast finishes abruptly against a white belly. During its breeding display, the male inflates air sacs under its breast feathers and makes a booming call. Winter birds are gray-brown above and on the chest, again with a sharp border against the white belly. The male bird is noticeably bigger than the female; juveniles are similar to the adult. The Pectoral Sandpiper is often seen foraging in small flocks on mud flats and in short grass, looking for insects and small crustaceans.

Semipalmated Sandpiper *(right)*

Scientific name: *Calidris pusilla*
Length: $6\frac{1}{4}$ inches
Habitat: Mudflats, Arctic tundra
Identification: Small, short-billed shore bird. Breeding adult has mottled warm brown-gray on back, head and upper breast sometimes tinged rufous, white belly. Winter birds gray above, white below
Similar species: In winter plumage, easily confused with Western and Least sandpipers. In summer is less rufous than either

The Semipalmated Sandpiper is seen in large flocks in spring and fall across much of North America, as it migrates from its breeding ground in the far north to spend the winter in South America. It spends the summer on Arctic tundra, where it lays 4 buff-olive eggs in a leaf-lined scrape on dry ground. These are incubated by both birds for around 20 days; the young leave the nest soon after hatching and are independent within 2-3 weeks. The adult is small and rather plump, with a short, straight black bill and black legs and feet. In breeding plumage it is mottled in warm brown-gray on the back, head and upper breast - although sometimes with a rusty tint - and has white flanks and belly. Winter birds are gray above fading round onto the chest, and white below. The juveniles have a dark cap, more evenly colored upperparts and a white eyebrow. The Semipalmated Sandpiper is named for the webbing which partly joins its front toes into a "palm" that helps it walk over soft mud to forage for marine animals and aquatic insects.



White-rumped Sandpiper

Scientific name: *Calidris fuscicollis*
Length: $7\frac{1}{2}$ inches
Habitat: Marshes, mudflats, flooded fields
Identification: Small, long-winged shore bird, white rump visible in flight. Breeding adult has warm gray-brown back, black streaks on chest and flanks. Winter birds dark gray above, white below
Similar species: Baird's Sandpiper similar but is browner overall and lacks white rump

The White-rumped Sandpiper is often seen among other shore birds and so can be easily overlooked. It breeds in the Arctic but is seen inland in spring and fall across east and central North America, as it migrates southwards to spend the winter in South America. It spends the summer on the Arctic tundra of the far north, where it lays 4 buff or greeny-brown eggs in a shallow cup in the ground lined with leaves or grass. These are incubated by both birds for around 3 weeks; the young leave the nest soon after hatching and are independent between 2 and 3 weeks later. The adult is small, with long wings that extend past the tip of the tail in the standing bird, dark gray legs and feet and a reddish patch on the base of the lower bill that may be difficult to see. In breeding plumage it has a warm gray-brown back, and black streaks on white chest and flanks. Winter birds are dark gray above, white below. In all plumages, the white rump is visible in flight. The juveniles are similar to the adult, but more rufous. The White-rumped Sandpiper is often seen looking for marine worms and aquatic insects with other peeps and it is often difficult to tell them apart at a distance. It is perhaps seen foraging in fresh water more often than other small sandpipers.

Baird's Sandpiper

Scientific name: *Calidris bairdii*
Length: $7\frac{1}{2}$ inches
Habitat: Beaches, lakes, wet fields
Identification: Small, long-winged shore bird. Breeding adult has warm brown-gray back, buff wash on chest, white beneath. Winter birds gray-brown above, white below
Similar species: White-rumped Sandpiper is grayer overall and has white rump in flight. Least Sandpiper is smaller, shorter bill turns down at tip, has yellow legs

Unlike many other sandpipers, Baird's is often seen foraging on dry mudflats some distance from the water. It breeds in the Arctic but is seen in small flocks in spring and fall across much of North America, as it migrates south to winter high in the Andes of South America. The adult birds tend to move down the center of the country, but juveniles cover a much broader area and may be seen on both the east and west coasts. Baird's Sandpiper spends the summer on Arctic tundra, where it lays 4 buffy, brown-spotted eggs in a shallow, unlined scrape in bare, dry ground. These are incubated by both parent birds for just over 3 weeks; the young leave the nest soon after hatching and are independent around 3 weeks later. The adult is small, with long wings that extend well past the tip of the tail in the standing bird, dark gray legs and feet and a dark bill. In breeding plumage it has a warm brown-gray back, with a buff wash on the neck and chest and white beneath. Winter birds are gray-brown above and white below. The juvenile is very similar to the adult, but pale edges to the brown feathers give its back a scaled look. Baird's Sandpiper mainly eats insects and small crustaceans.

Dunlin

Scientific name: *Calidris alpina*
Length: $8\frac{1}{2}$ inches
Habitat: Mud flats, Arctic tundra
Identification: Stocky shore bird, long down-curved bill. Breeding adult gray-brown on head, neck and upper breast, rufous back, belly and flanks whitish with black belly patch. Winter birds brown-gray above, whitish below
Similar species: Easily confused with Rock Sandpiper, but has a black belly patch rather than dark gray lower breast patch, and darker legs



Large flocks of Dunlins can be seen on mud flats along both North American coasts from fall through to spring. When disturbed, hundreds of birds rise in a tightly-packed swirling mass, flying in perfect formation. The Dunlin spends the summer on Arctic tundra in the far north, where it breeds and lays 4 buff greenish, brown-spotted eggs in a small scrape in the ground lined with grass. These are incubated by both adults for around 3 weeks; the young leave the nest soon after hatching and are looked after by both parents. The adult is stocky with a short neck, a bill that is heavy at the base but slimmer and downcurved at the tip and is longer than the head, and dark legs and feet. In breeding plumage it is gray-brown on the head, neck and upper breast, with a rufous back, and whitish belly and flanks with black belly patch. Winter birds are an even dull brown-gray above, and whitish below. The juvenile is brown above and buff below, with darker streaks on breast and flanks. The Dunlin wades slowly through shallow water, probing with its bill to find mollusks, aquatic insects and small crustaceans.

Rock Sandpiper

Scientific name: *Calidris ptilocnemis*
Length: 9 inches
Habitat: Rocky shores, tundra
Identification: Stocky, orange-legged, shore bird, long bill. Breeding adult brown-gray streaked black on head, neck and upper breast, rufous-gray back feathers edged with white or buff, belly and flanks spotted dark gray-brown with dark gray lower breast patch. Winter birds purple-gray above, whitish below
Similar species: Easily confused with Purple Sandpiper, but has breast patch and a different range. Dunlin also quite similar but has a black belly patch



Like the Purple Sandpiper, the Rock is more a "rockpiper" than a sandpiper. It is the west coast equivalent of the Purple, being seen in winter on coastal rocks along the west coast. It spends the summer on Arctic tundra in the far northwest, where it breeds and lays 4 olive, brown-spotted eggs in a small hollow in the ground. These are incubated by both parents for around 3 weeks; the young leave the nest soon after hatching and are looked after mainly by the male. The adult is stocky with a long, slender, slightly downcurved dark bill, and greeny-yellow legs and feet. In breeding plumage it is brown-gray heavily streaked with black on head, neck and upper breast, the rufous-gray back feathers are edged with white or buff, and breast and flanks are spotted dark gray-brown with a dark gray lower breast patch. Winter birds are gray above with a purple sheen, and whitish below with distinct spotting. In flight, the wings have a bold white stripe. The juvenile is similar to the adult. The Rock Sandpiper forages on coastal rocks for mollusks, insects and small crustaceans.

Purple Sandpiper

Scientific name: *Calidris maritima*
Length: 9 inches
Habitat: Rocky east coast shores, Arctic tundra
Identification: Stocky, orange-legged, shore bird, long bill. Breeding adult brown-gray streaked black on head, neck and upper breast, brown-gray back feathers edged with white or buff, belly and flanks spotted dark gray-brown. Winter birds purple-gray above, whitish below
Similar species: Easily confused with Rock Sandpiper, but lacks breast patch and has a different range



More a "rockpiper" than a sandpiper, the Purple Sandpiper is mainly seen in winter on coastal rocks and stone breakwaters along the east coast. It spends the summer on Arctic tundra in the far northeast, where it breeds and lays 4 greenish, brown-spotted eggs in a hollow in the ground. These are incubated mainly by the male for around 3 weeks; the young leave the nest soon after hatching and are independent within a further 3 weeks. The adult is stocky with a long, slender, slightly downcurved dark bill that is yellow-orange at the base, and orange legs and feet. In breeding plumage it is brown-gray streaked with black on head, neck and upper breast, the brown-gray back feathers are edged with white or buff, and the belly and flanks are spotted dark gray-brown. Winter birds are gray above with a purple sheen, and whitish below. In flight, the wings have a distinct white stripe. The juvenile is similar to the adult. The Purple Sandpiper forages on coastal rocks for mollusks, algae and small crustaceans.

Stilt Sandpiper

Scientific name: *Calidris himantopus*
Length: $8\frac{1}{2}$ inches
Habitat: Shallow muddy pools
Identification: Slender, long-billed bird with long greenish legs. Breeding bird chestnut ear patch, gray-brown above, white barred with dark brown beneath. Winter birds gray above, whitish beneath
Similar species: Feeds in the same distinctive way as a dowitcher, but is much smaller. General size and shape more like Lesser Yellowlegs, but lacks bright yellow legs

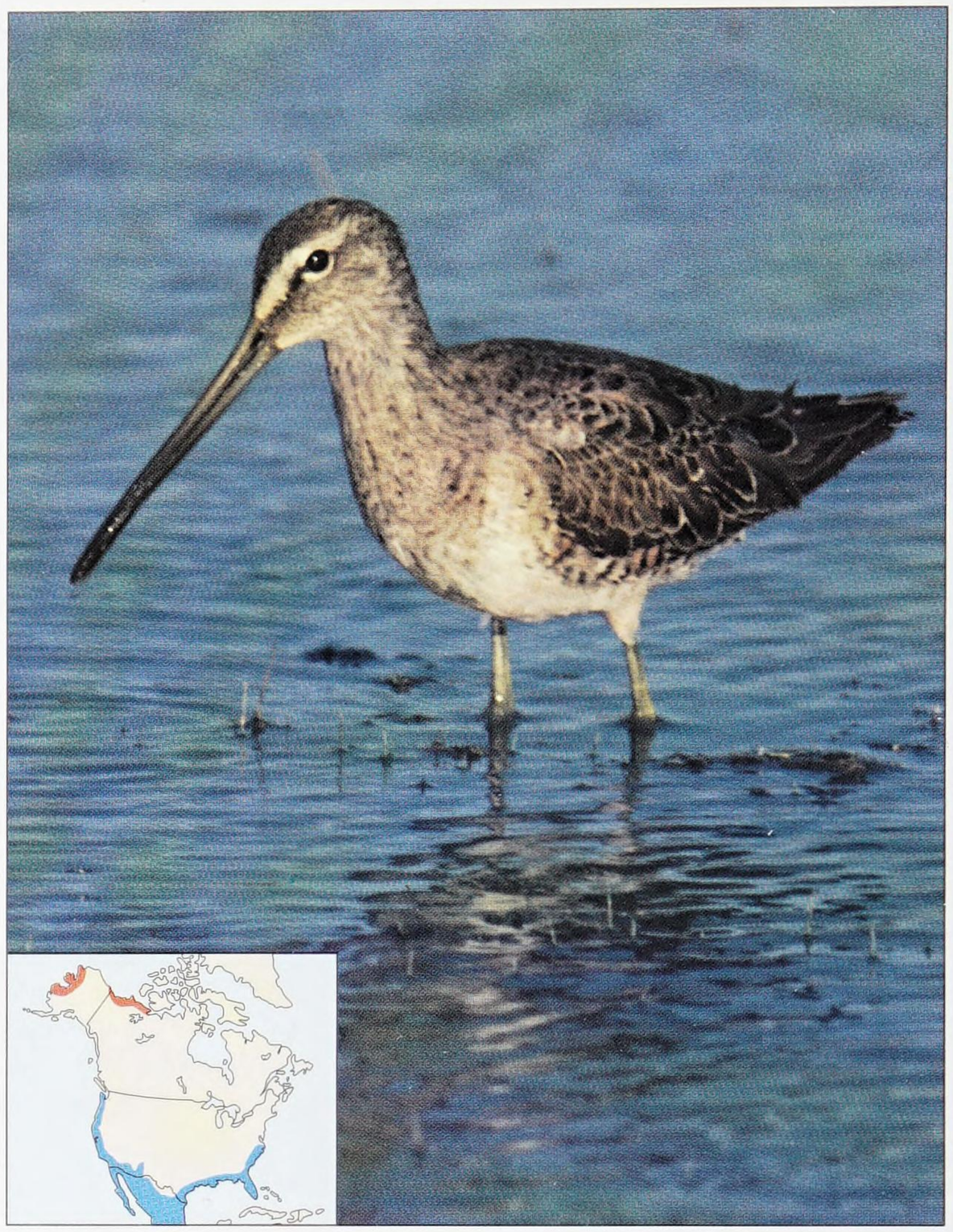


Since it breeds in the far north and spends the winter in the far south, the Stilt Sandpiper is seen across central North America in migration, traveling in dense flocks. On the coast, it is also often seen in fall as it migrates south, although seldom in large numbers. It prefers muddy fields, shallow pools, mud flats and marshy areas, but spends the brief Arctic summer on tundra, where it breeds and lays 4 olive-greenish eggs, usually spotted with brown, in an unlined hollow in dry ground. The eggs are incubated by both adults for about 3 weeks and the downy young leave the nest soon after hatching and are independent in 2-3 weeks. The adult is a slender bird, with long, thin, greenish legs and a rather heavy, drooping bill. In breeding plumage, it has a chestnut ear patch and is gray-brown above and white barred with dark brown beneath. Winter birds are gray above, and whitish beneath. The juvenile is similar to the winter adult, but more heavily patterned; very young birds have a buff wash on the breast. The Stilt Sandpiper is often seen feeding with dowitchers and both species have the same way of rhythmically bobbing their heads up and down as they hunt for mollusks, worms, aquatic plants and insect larvae.

Long-billed Dowitcher

Scientific name: *Limnodromus scolopaceus*
Length: 11½ inches
Habitat: Mud flats, shallow fresh water
Identification: Stocky, long-billed, shore bird with greenish legs. Breeding bird has chestnut-orange neck with dark streaks, brown-white-rufous chequered back, orange belly. Winter birds brownish-gray above, white eyebrow stripe, whitish beneath
Similar species: Short-billed and Long-billed are almost identical, but the Short-billed favors salt water and the Long-billed prefers fresh

The female Long-billed Dowitcher has a much longer bill than the Short-billed, but the bill of the male is the same length. The Long-billed spends the summer in the far northwest Arctic and migrates across central North America to spend the winter in the south. They breed on Arctic tundra marsh, laying 4 greenish eggs, with brown markings, in a scrape in the ground. The eggs are incubated by both adult birds for about 3 weeks and the downy young leave the nest soon after hatching. The adult bird is stocky, with a long, dark bill and greenish legs. The breeding adult has a chestnut-orange neck with dark streaks, a brown-white-rufous chequered back, and an orange belly with dark barring on the flanks. Winter birds (*right*) have brownish-gray plumage above, a white eyebrow stripe, and are whitish beneath. Juveniles are gray-buff below with a whitish belly, and rufous edging to dark back feathers. Long-billed Dowitchers prefer fresh water and are found in muddy fields, shallow pools, mud flats and marshy areas. Like the Short-billed, they feed by rhythmically bobbing their heads up and down as they hunt for snails, crustaceans and insect larvae.



Short-billed Dowitcher

Scientific name: *Limnodromus griseus*
Length: 11 inches
Habitat: Beaches, mud flats, shallow salt water
Identification: Stocky, long-billed, shore bird with greenish legs. Breeding bird usually has chestnut-orange neck, brown-white-rufous chequered back, white or orange belly. Winter birds brownish-gray above, white eyebrow stripe, whitish beneath
Similar species: Short-billed and Long-billed are almost identical, but the Short-billed favors salt water and the Long-billed prefers fresh

The Short-billed Dowitcher is established in three breeding colonies across central Canada, with each having a distinct color variation in plumage. Birds in the west have a white belly with dark barring and a darker, rufous back, birds in the center are orange beneath with no spotting on the neck, and those in the east are similar to western birds but have a less rufous back. In its breeding grounds, it lays 4 buff-greenish eggs, spotted with brown, in a depression in dry ground. The eggs are incubated by both adults for about 3 weeks and the young leave the nest soon after hatching. In winter, the Short-billed Dowitcher is found on beaches, mud flats and marshy areas in southern North America; the plumage of all winter birds is similar (*right*), with brown-gray above, a white eyebrow stripe, and whitish beneath.The adult bird is stocky, with a long, dark bill and greenish legs. Dowitchers feed by rhythmically bobbing their heads up and down as they hunt for snails, crustaceans and insect larvae. The Short-billed Dowitcher prefers salt water which distinguishes it from the Long-billed - the difference in bill length is not readily apparent.





Red Knot

Scientific name:	*Calidris canutus*
Length:	$10\frac{1}{2}$ inches
Habitat:	Sandy beaches, mud flats
Identification:	Medium-size, stout, short-legged shore bird. Breeding bird mottled gray-brown, black and chestnut above, reddish beneath. Winter birds pale gray on back, white beneath
Similar species:	Breeding plumage is distinctive. In winter plumage could be mistaken for a Dowitcher or Willet, but has a much shorter, stout bill

The Red Knot is seen in great numbers in some areas, but hardly at all in others. It frequents open tidal flats and sandy beaches along both coasts in winter, and spends the summer on Arctic tundra; it is only seen infrequently inland during migration. It breeds on dry, open tundra, laying 4 buff, brown-spotted eggs in a scantily lined scrape in gravel. The eggs are incubated by both adult birds for about 22 days and the downy young leave the nest soon after hatching and are independent within 20 days. The adult is one of the larger sandpipers, but is rather stout with a short neck and legs. Its bill is dark-colored, quite short and thick, and it has yellow-olive legs and feet. The breeding plumage (*above*) is mottled gray-brown, black and chestnut above, and reddish beneath. Winter birds are pale gray above and white beneath. The juvenile is similar to the winter adult, but is more spotted below and scaley above. The Red Knot feeds on beaches and mud flats, foraging for mollusks, seeds and insect larvae. Thousands of birds congregate in May each year on Delaware Bay, to feast on the new-laid eggs of horseshoe crabs.

Common Snipe

Scientific name: *Gallinago gallinago*
Length: $10\frac{1}{2}$ inches
Habitat: Marshes, damp fields, muddy pond edges
Identification: Very stocky, long-billed, short-legged, short-winged marsh bird. Adult bird has striped head, brown mottled back, barred flanks. Rapid, sharp zig-zag flight
Similar species: Shape, plumage and bill distinctive

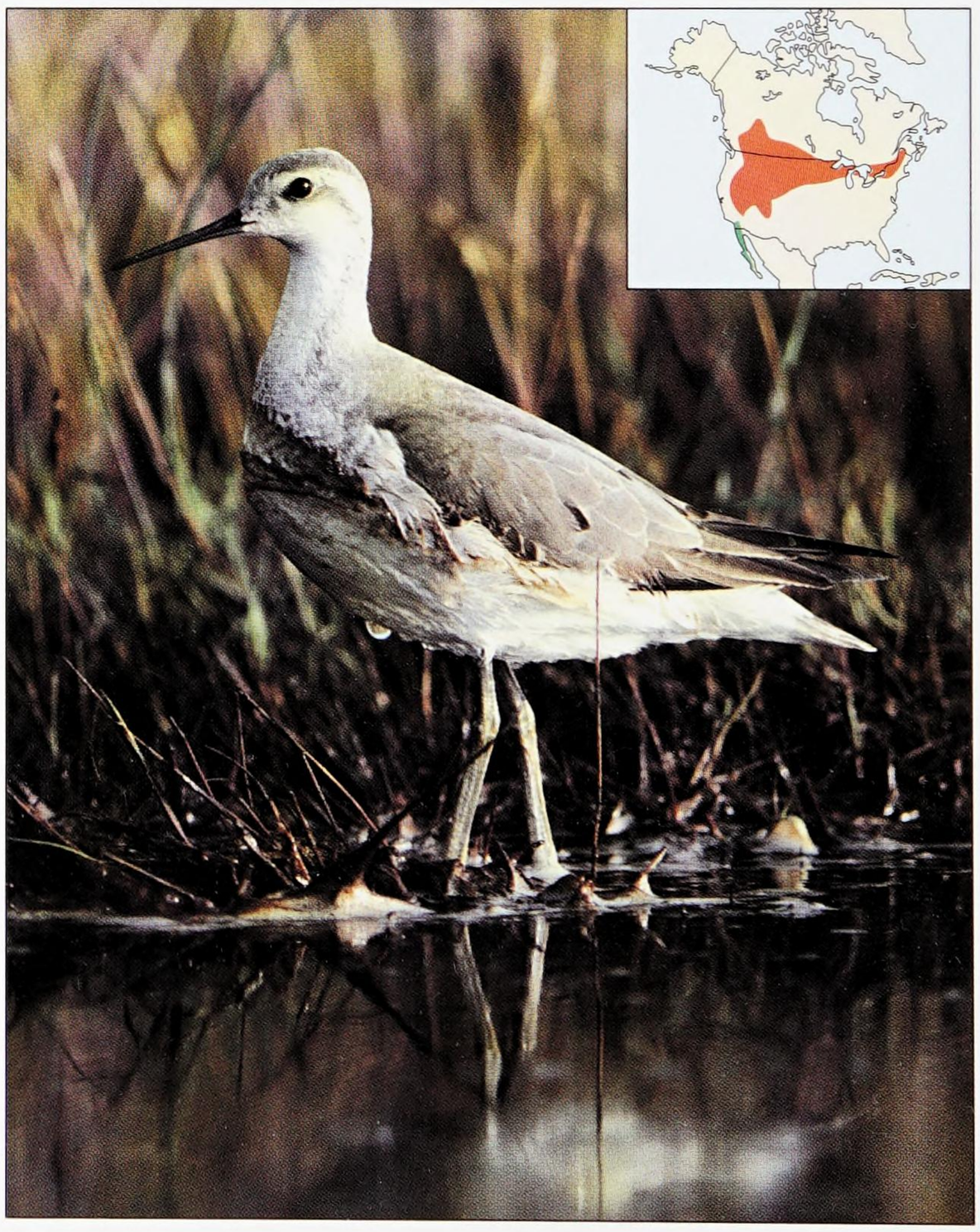
A very solitary and secretive bird, the Common Snipe is more often seen in flight after it has been flushed than on the ground. It was previously known as Wilson's Snipe and is found across much of North America - except in the Rockies - in bogs and marshy areas with enough vegetation to provide cover. It spends the summer in the northern half of the continent, breeding in marshes and damp areas where it lays 4 olive-brown eggs in a grass-lined depression in the ground. The eggs are incubated by the female for up to 3 weeks and the downy young leave the nest soon after hatching and are independent within 20 days. In winter it moves further south. The adult bird is very stocky, with a long, straight bill, short neck and legs and short wings. It has lengthwise stripes on the head, a brown mottled back streaked with white, dark barred flanks and a white belly. Its rapid, sharply zig-zagging flight when flushed is distinctive, and during its swooping display flight it vibrates its tail feathers to make a hooting sound. The Common Snipe forages in all kinds of muddy habitats, where it probes with its long bill in a rhythmic, jerky motion, penetrating deeply into the mud to catch crustaceans, insects and other small animals.



Wilson's Phalarope

Scientific name: *Phalaropus tricolor*
Length: $9\frac{1}{4}$ inches
Habitat: Marshes, grassy edges of shallow lakes
Identification: Slender marsh bird with thin, needle-like bill and long legs. Breeding female has black and chestnut neck stripes, gray and white head, gray back, rusty tint to breast. Male is duller. Winter birds are gray above, white beneath
Similar species: Breeding bird is distinctive, winter bird similar to Stilt Sandpiper and Lesser Yellowlegs, but Wilson's Phalarope is a more nervous, darting feeder. In flight, is distinguished from other phalaropes by white rump and lack of white wing stripe

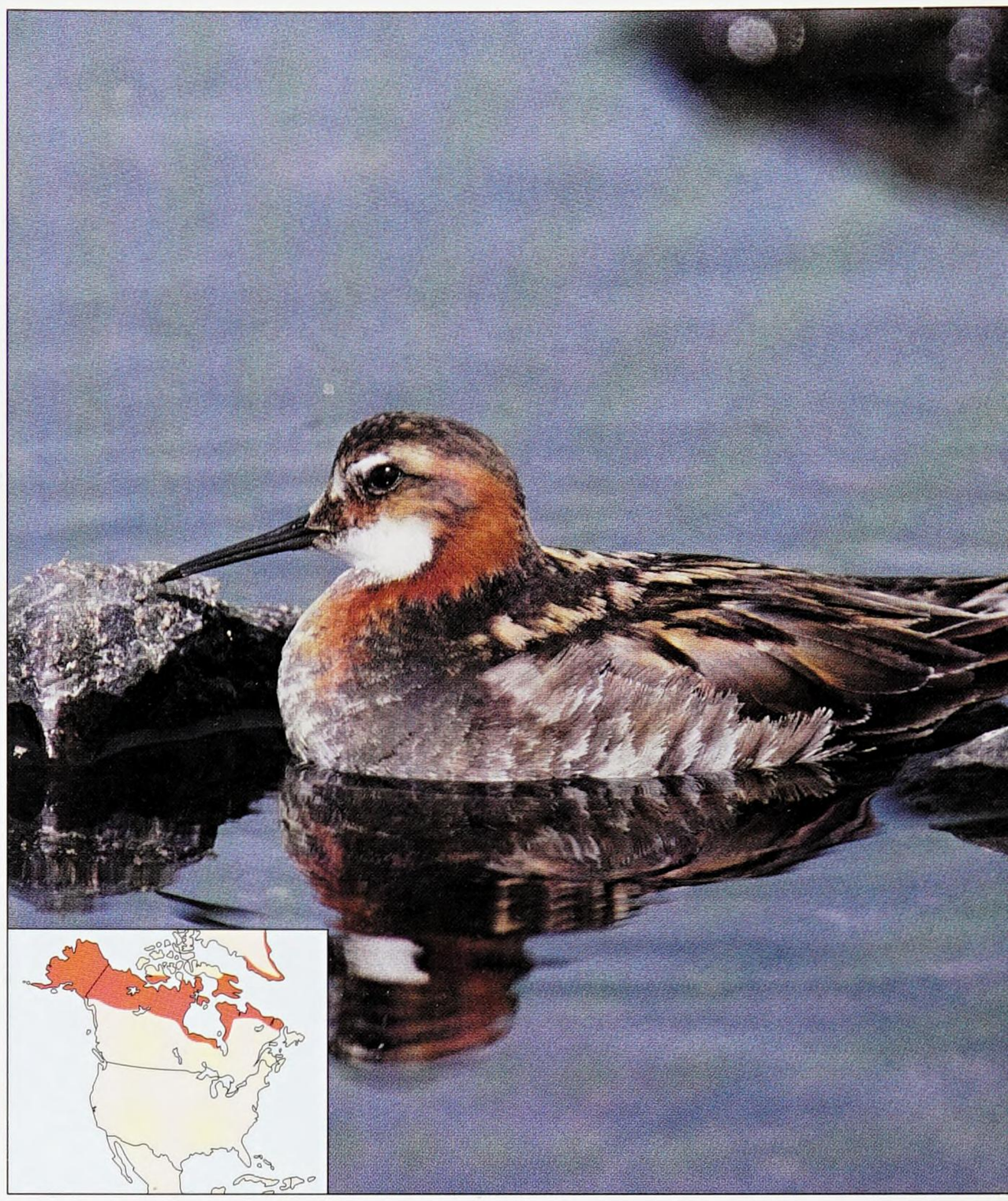
Phalaropes are a type of sandpiper, although some experts believe they should be a separate family. Wilson's Phalarope is an inland bird that is never found on open ocean. It spends the summer in western North America, and migrates to winter in the Southern Hemisphere. It nests in marshes, laying up to 4 buff eggs splotched with brown and gray in a grass-lined depression in the ground. The eggs are incubated by the male alone for up to 3 weeks and the downy young leave the nest soon after hatching and are tended by the male until they are ready to fly. The adult bird is slender, with a thin, needle-like bill and long legs that are black in the breeding season and yellow at other times. The breeding female is larger than the male and has black and chestnut neck stripes, a gray and white head, a gray back and a rusty tint to the breast. The male is duller. Winter birds (*right*) are gray above and white beneath. Wilson's Phalarope eats insect larvae, small crustaceans and seeds.



Red-necked Phalarope

Scientific name: *Phalaropus lobatus*
Length: $7\frac{3}{4}$ inches
Habitat: Tundra ponds, offshore
Identification: Small sea bird with thin, dark, needle-like bill. Breeding female is gray with bright rusty-red to front and sides of neck, white throat, buff stripes on back. Male is duller. Winter birds are gray above, white beneath with paler streaks on back and black ear and crown markings
Similar species: Breeding bird is distinctive. In flight, winter bird is distinguished from winter Wilson's Phalarope by bold white wing stripe

The Red-necked Phalarope spends the summer on Arctic tundra, and winters at sea in the Southern Hemisphere. It is often seen off the Pacific coast in migration, and on western lakes in fall, but is rare off the east coast. It nests near ponds on wet ground, laying 2-4 olive-buff, thickly spotted eggs in a grass-lined scrape in the tundra. The larger and more colorful female courts the male and then defends the nest site while the male incubates the eggs for up to 3 weeks. The young leave the nest after hatching and are tended by the male until they are ready to fly at 3 weeks. The adult has a thin, dark needle-like bill and dark legs. The breeding female is dark gray with bright rusty-red to the front and sides of the neck, a white throat, and buff stripes to the back. The male (*right*) is duller, with a buff-colored neck. Winter birds are gray above and white beneath, with paler streaks to the back and black ear and crown markings. In flight, a bold white wing stripe is evident in all plumages. The Red-necked Phalarope prefers to swim rather than wade, and plucks small crustaceans and insects from the surface.



American Woodcock

Scientific name: *Scolopax minor*
Length: 11 inches
Habitat: Damp woodlands and fields
Identification: Plump, long-billed, short-legged, woodland bird. Adult bird has crosswise black bars on crown, large dark eyes, black-buff-whitish patterned back, orange-buff belly
Similar species: Shape, plumage and bill distinctive

The American Woodcock is a nocturnal and secretive bird, which hides in brushy woodland during the day but may come out onto damp fields at night. It is found across eastern North America as far north as the Great Lakes in summer, but is seldom seen unless flushed. At the start of the breeding season in early spring, the male performs a nocturnal courtship display, strutting on the ground then taking off, singing and circling round, before swooping down to mate. It nests in damp woodland, laying up to 4 buff-cinnamon eggs in a leaf-lined depression in the ground. The eggs are incubated by the female for up to 3 weeks and the downy young leave the nest soon after hatching and are independent within around 14 days. In winter, birds in the north move further south. The adult bird is round-bodied, with large dark eyes, a very long bill and short legs. Both sexes are similar, with crosswise black bars on the crown, a black-buff-whitish patterned back that blends in with drifts of dead leaves, and an orange-buff belly. The American Woodcock forages in damp habitats, particularly wet fields where it probes with its long bill to find earthworms and insects.



Parasitic Jaeger

Scientific name: *Stercorarius parasiticus*
Length: 19 inches, wingspan 42 inches
Habitat: Offshore, Great Lakes, open tundra
Identification: Seabird, long pointed wings with white patch below, white flash above near tip. Dark adult uniformly dark brown. Light adult brown above, white below, white neck, yellow tint to cheeks, black cap, gray-brown wash on chest
Similar species: Long-tailed Jaeger is similar to light variation Parasitic, but lacks gray-brown wash on breast, has long tail streamers. In flight, adult lacks white wing markings. Juvenile Parasitic is warmer colored than grayer juvenile Long-tailed

The name jaeger comes from the German word for hunter; the Parasitic Jaeger preys on young birds and lemmings on its breeding grounds and in winter robs other seabirds. It is the most common jaeger off the southeast and southwest coasts, but is rarely spotted inland. It breeds on Arctic tundra, laying 2 olive, brown-spotted eggs in a depression in the ground, sometimes lined with a few lichens. Both adults incubate the eggs, for up to 4 weeks, and the young birds leave the nest about 5 weeks later. The adult is bulky, with a short, pointed tail and long, pointed wings that in flight show a white patch beneath and usually a white flash above near the tip. The dark variation adult is uniformly dark brown, the light variation is brown above and white below, with a white neck, yellow tint to the cheeks, a black cap, and a gray-brown wash across the chest. The juveniles are uniformly dark. The Parasitic Jaeger flies low over the tundra in summer, snatching eggs, nestlings or lemmings to feed itself and its young. In winter, it harasses other seabirds until they drop their catch, which the jaeger then snatches.



Long-tailed Jaeger

Scientific name: *Stercorarius longicaudus*
Length: 22 inches, wingspan 40 inches
Habitat: Dry tundra, offshore
Identification: Predatory seabird, long pointed wings, long tail streamers. Adult brown above, white below, white neck, yellow tint to cheeks, neat black cap
Similar species: Similar to light variation Parasitic, but lacks gray-brown wash on breast and has long tail streamers. In flight, lacks white wing patch. Juvenile Parasitic is warmer colored than grayer juvenile Long-tailed

The Long-tailed Jaeger is rarely seen from the shore, as it migrates across the open ocean to spend the winter in the Southern Hemisphere. It breeds on dry upland tundra, usually laying 2 olive-brown, spotted eggs in a scrape in the ground or moss. Both adult birds incubate the eggs, for just over 3 weeks, and the young birds are ready to leave the nest a further 3 weeks later. The adult is more slender and delicate than the Parasitic, with long tail streamers - although these may sometimes be broken or missing - and long, pointed wings. Its plumage is brown above and white below, with a white neck, yellow tint to the cheeks, and a neat black cap. The juvenile lacks tail streamers and varies from dark gray to pale gray with a darker back with whitish tips to the feathers; in flight it shows a white patch below the wing, near the tip. The Long-tailed Jaeger also preys on eggs, nestlings and lemmings on its tundra breeding grounds, but robs other birds less frequently in winter.





Great Black-backed Gull

Scientific name:	*Larus marinus*
Length:	30 inches, wingspan 65 inches
Habitat:	Great Lakes, coastal areas
Identification:	Large, long-winged seabird with big yellow bill. Mature bird has large white head, black upperparts, white underparts, pink legs
Similar species:	Size is distinctve, but 1st winter juvenile is checkered gray-brown with a black bill and resembles 1st winter Herring Gull, although head and underparts are lighter

A very common gull along the northeast coast, the Great Black-backed Gull is also found some way inland and on the eastern Great Lakes and is expanding further south - although it is still very rare around the Gulf. It nests in colonies, sometimes with other seabirds, building a cup of seaweed, grass and moss to hold 2-3 olive-brown, spotted eggs. These are incubated by both parents for around 28 days; the downy young cannot fly until around 8 weeks, but leave the nest soon after hatching. The Great Black-backed Gull takes 4 years to reach its mature plumage. The 1st winter bird is checkered gray-brown with lighter head and underparts and a large black bill. By the 2nd winter, it has much whiter underparts and head and the back is darker gray. In the 3rd winter the plumage is more like the adult, with a white head and underparts and a mainly yellow bill, although there is still some brown in the wings. The adult has a white head with pale eyes and a yellow bill, black upperparts, white underparts, and pink legs. In flight, its wings are black above, with white along the trailing edge and underneath and it shows a white rump. The Great Black-backed Gull eats fish and the eggs and young of other seabirds; it also scavenges in garbage dumps and eats carrion.

Glaucous Gull *(below)*

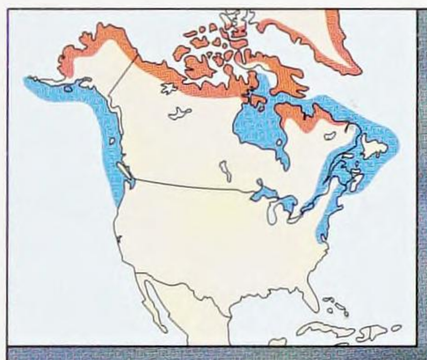
Scientific name:	*Larus hyperboreus*
Length:	27 inches, wingspan 60 inches
Habitat:	Arctic coastal areas, offshore
Identification:	Large gull with yellow bill marked in red. Mature bird has white head and neck in summer, head streaked brown in winter, pale gray back, white underparts, wings pale gray with white tips, pink legs and feet
Similar species:	No other gulls are as pale, except the smaller Iceland Gull, which is a rare visitor

An Arctic species, the Glaucous Gull spends the summer all across the far north and winters down both coasts - although it rarely comes down as far as California in the west and Florida in the east. It breeds in colonies on rocks or on Arctic tundra, building a large nest of seaweed or grass on a sheltered ledge or a depression in the ground to hold 2 or 3 buff or olive, brown-blotched eggs. These are incubated by both parents for around 4 weeks. The Glaucous Gull takes 4 years to reach its mature plumage. The 1st winter bird is whitish or pale fawn overall, with a pink bill tipped with black and small dark eyes. Its wings are narrow and pale buff, with white tips. By the 2nd winter its back is very pale gray, and its eyes are pale. The 3rd winter bird is much like the adult, but the yellow bill has a dark smudgy patch and the body still has some buff. The breeding adult generally has a white head and neck, a yellow bill marked with a red spot, pale eyes, a very pale gray back, white underparts, and pink legs and feet. In winter, its head is lightly streaked brown. In flight, its wings are very pale gray, with a narrow band of white along the trailing edge and white wing tips. The Glaucous Gull is a predator which preys on the eggs and young of other sea birds, frequents garbage dumps to scavenge, and forces eiders to drop their catch.

Mew Gull

Scientific name:	*Larus canus*
Length:	16 inches, wingspan 43 inches
Habitat:	Coastal areas, forest lakes
Identification:	Medium-size seabird with thin yellow bill. Mature bird has white head and neck in summer, washed brown in winter, dark-gray back, white underparts, black and white wing tips, yellow legs and feet
Similar species:	Adult Ring-billed Gull has black ring on bill, less white on tips of primary wing feathers, lighter gray back. Black-legged Kittiwake has black legs and lacks white spots on wingtip in flight

The North American Mew Gull is only found in western North America, in summer across Alaska and northwest Canada and in winter down the Pacific coast, but it is very similar to the European Mew Gull, also known as the Common Gull, which is sometimes seen along the east coast in winter. The American Mew Gull is a coastal bird in winter and is rarely seen inland. It breeds in colonies, often with other gulls, building a nest of grass, seaweed or stems on beaches, riverbanks or in a tree to hold 2 or 3 olive-buff, brown-splotched eggs. These are incubated by both parents for around 4 weeks, but the young birds do not fly until about 5 weeks later, although they leave the nest soon after hatching. The juvenile bird takes 3 years to reach mature plumage, but by its 1st winter has a gray mantle and a white-spotted breast, with a pale brown wash on head and neck and a two-tone bill. By the 2nd winter it is gray above and whitish beneath. In summer the adult has a white head and neck, a dark-gray back, white underparts, black and white wing tips, and yellow legs and feet. In winter, its head and neck are washed brown. Its wings are slate-gray above, with white along the trailing edge and beneath, and black wing tips with large white spots. The Mew Gull is not a scavenger, preferring to forage for worms and mollusks.





Black-legged Kittiwake

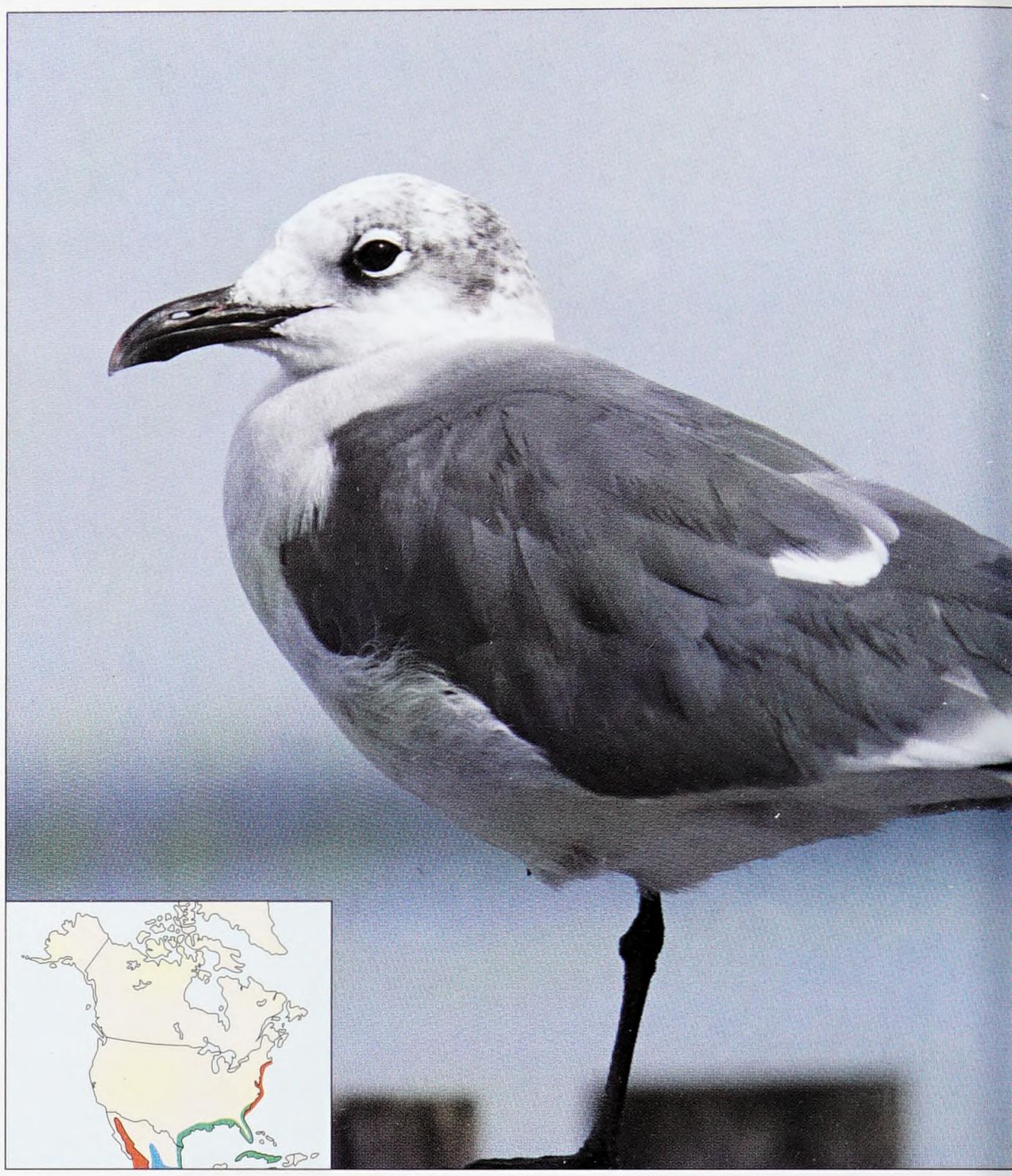
Scientific name:	*Rissa tridactyla*
Length:	17 inches, wingspan 36 inches
Habitat:	Coastal cliffs, offshore
Identification:	Medium-size gull with black legs. Mature bird has white head and neck in summer, gray patch on the back of the head in winter, gray back, white underparts, black wing tips, yellow bill
Similar species:	Black legs are distinctive

A true "sea gull", the Black-legged Kittiwake spends much of its life out on the ocean and only comes to land to breed. It spends the summer in the far northwest and northeast and around Baffin Bay and migrates south in winter, sometimes coming as far as Mexico in the west and the Gulf coast in the east. It breeds in large colonies on very narrow ledges, building a neat nest of seaweed to hold 2 buff or pale green, dark-splotched eggs. These are incubated by both parents for about 3-4 weeks. The Black-legged Kittiwake takes 3 years to reach its mature plumage. The juvenile and 1st winter bird is gray above and white beneath, with a black half-collar, black spot behind the eye and with a black bill; in flight it has black stripes forming a W across the back and wings, and a black tail band. By the 2nd winter it is much like the adult, but with more black on the wing tip. In the breeding season the adult has a white head and neck, a yellow bill, dark eyes, a gray back, white underparts, and black legs and feet. In winter, it has a gray patch on the back of the head. In flight, its wings are gray above, paler towards the ends, with white linings and solid black tips. The Black-legged Kittiwake feeds at sea, even during the roughest weather. It follows fishing boats, but only to pick up the small mollusks and crustaceans brought to the surface, and dives underwater to catch small fish.

Laughing Gull

Scientific name: *Larus atricilla*
Length: 16½ inches, wingspan 40 inches
Habitat: Offshore, salt marshes, Great Lakes
Identification: Medium-size, long-winged seabird. Mature bird has black head in summer, gray streaked in winter, white neck and underparts, dark-gray back, black wing tips, reddish bill
Similar species: Adult Franklin's Gull has very similar summer coloring, but has more white around eye, in flight more white on tips of wing feathers, a white band between black and gray on wings and gray central tail feathers

Common along the southern Atlantic and Gulf coasts, the Laughing Gull ranges north to New England in summer, but is only found inland round Salton Sea. It breeds in colonies on salt marshes, building a nest of reeds and grass to hold 3-4 olive, brown-spotted eggs that are incubated by both adults. The juvenile bird takes 3 years to reach mature plumage, but by its 1st winter has gray sides and back, a whitish head and neck with a gray wash on the nape, brownish wings, a white belly and a black bill. By the 2nd winter, it is gray above and whiter beneath with a gray wash on the nape. In summer the adult has a black hooded head with narrow white crescents round the eyes, white neck and underparts, a dark-gray back, black wing tips and a reddish bill. In winter, the black hood fades to leave gray streaking to the rear of a white head. Its wings are slate-gray above, with white along the trailing edge and black wing tips touched with white, with a white rump and tail. The Laughing Gull eats fish, worms and insects and scavenges garbage from ships.



Franklin's Gull

Scientific name: *Larus pipixcan*
Length: 14½ inches, wingspan 36 inches
Habitat: Prairie marshes
Identification: Rather small, long-winged inland gull. Mature bird has black head in summer, half-hooded in dark gray in winter, white neck and underparts, dark-gray back, black and white wing tips, reddish bill
Similar species: Adult Laughing Gull has very similar summer coloring, but is larger, has less white around eye and on tips of primary wing feathers, all-white tail feathers in flight

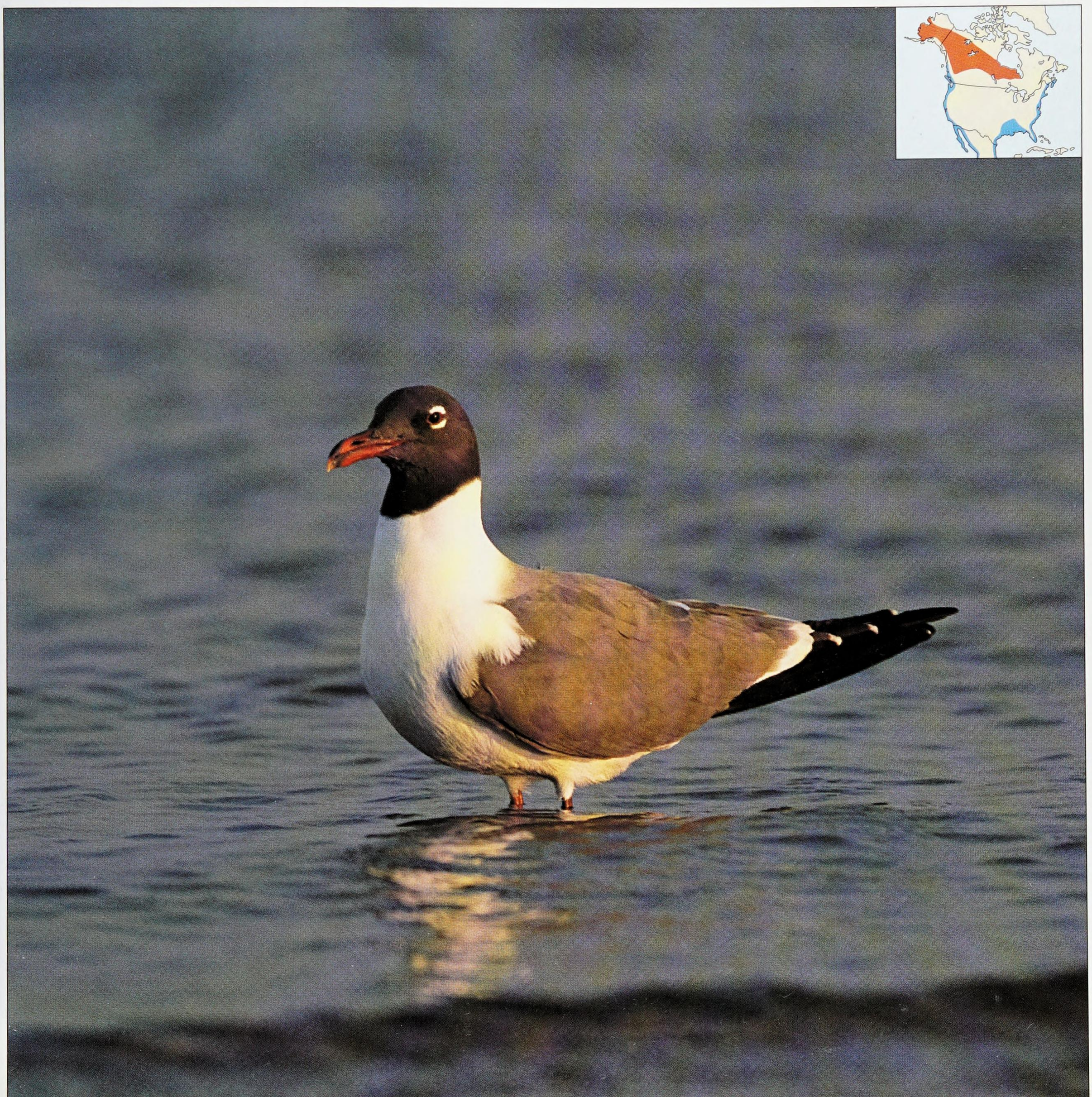
In North America, Franklin's Gull is a summer inland bird that is rarely seen on the coast and spends the winter in South America. It breeds in large colonies on prairie marshes, building a nest of reeds and grass to hold 3 olive-buffy-brown eggs that are incubated by both birds for around 3 weeks. The juvenile bird takes 3 years to reach its mature plumage, but by its 1st winter has gray sides and back, a whitish head and neck, brownish wings, a white belly and a black bill. By the 2nd winter, it is gray above and white beneath, with a neat black half-hood. In summer the adult has a black hooded head with broad white crescents round the eyes, a white neck, white underparts tinged pink, a dark-gray back, and a reddish bill. In winter, the black hood becomes a half-hood at the rear of a white head. Its wings are slate-gray above, with white running along the trailing edge and across to form a bar between the gray and black-and-white-striped wing tips; it also has a white rump with gray central tail feathers. Franklin's Gull mainly eats insects - including those that damage crops, so it often follows the plough.

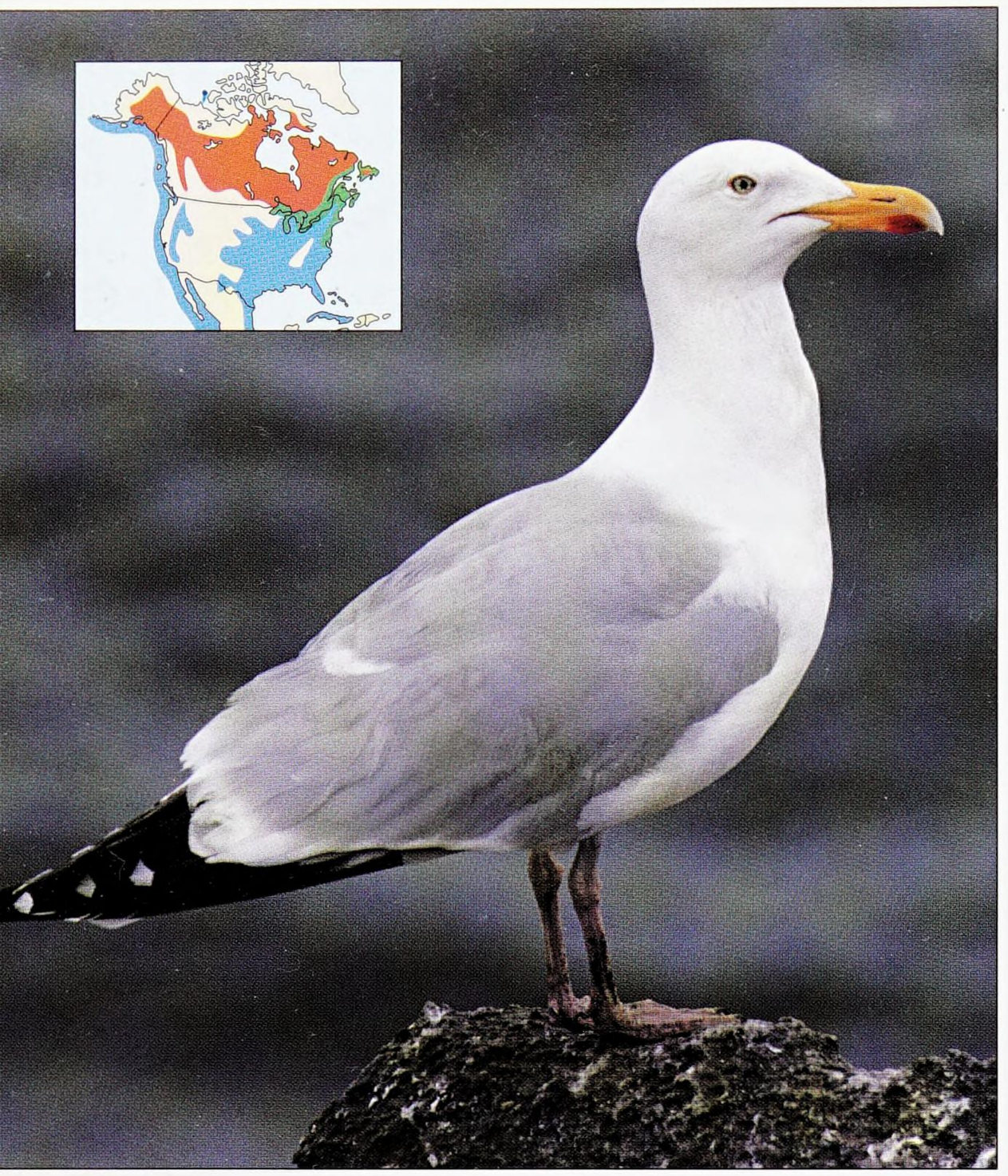


Bonaparte's Gull

Scientific name: *Larus philadelphia*
Length: 13½ inches, wingspan 33 inches
Habitat: Boreal forests, lakes, coastal areas
Identification: Small, narrow-winged gull. Mature bird has black head in summer, white in winter with dark ear patch, white neck with gray mantle, white underparts, gray back, white triangle on wings in flight, orange-red legs, black bill
Similar species: Distinguished from Franklin's Gull by triangle of white on upper wing in flight

The smallest of the common gulls, Bonaparte's spends the summer in boreal forests from Alaska to Hudson Bay and migrates south to winter around the southern coastlines. It does not usually flock with other gulls, and is rarely seen scavenging. It breeds in loose colonies in coniferous forest, building a well-constructed nest up to 20 feet above ground in a tree, in which it lays 2 or 3 olive, brown-blotched eggs. These are incubated by both parents for around 3 weeks. Bonaparte's Gull takes 2 years to reach its mature plumage. Its 1st winter plumage is gray above and white beneath, with diagonal black-brown lines across the wings, and a black tail band. The adult has a white triangle on the upper wings and a white tail in flight, orange-red legs, and a slender, straight black bill. In the breeding season it has a black hooded head, a white neck with gray mantle, white underparts, and a gray back. In winter, its head is white with a dark ear patch. Bonaparte's Gull is dainty and graceful in flight, skimming over the water to snatch fish, or dropping down to pick up insects, crustaceans and marine worms. However, it is often robbed of its catch by marauding jaegers.





Herring Gull

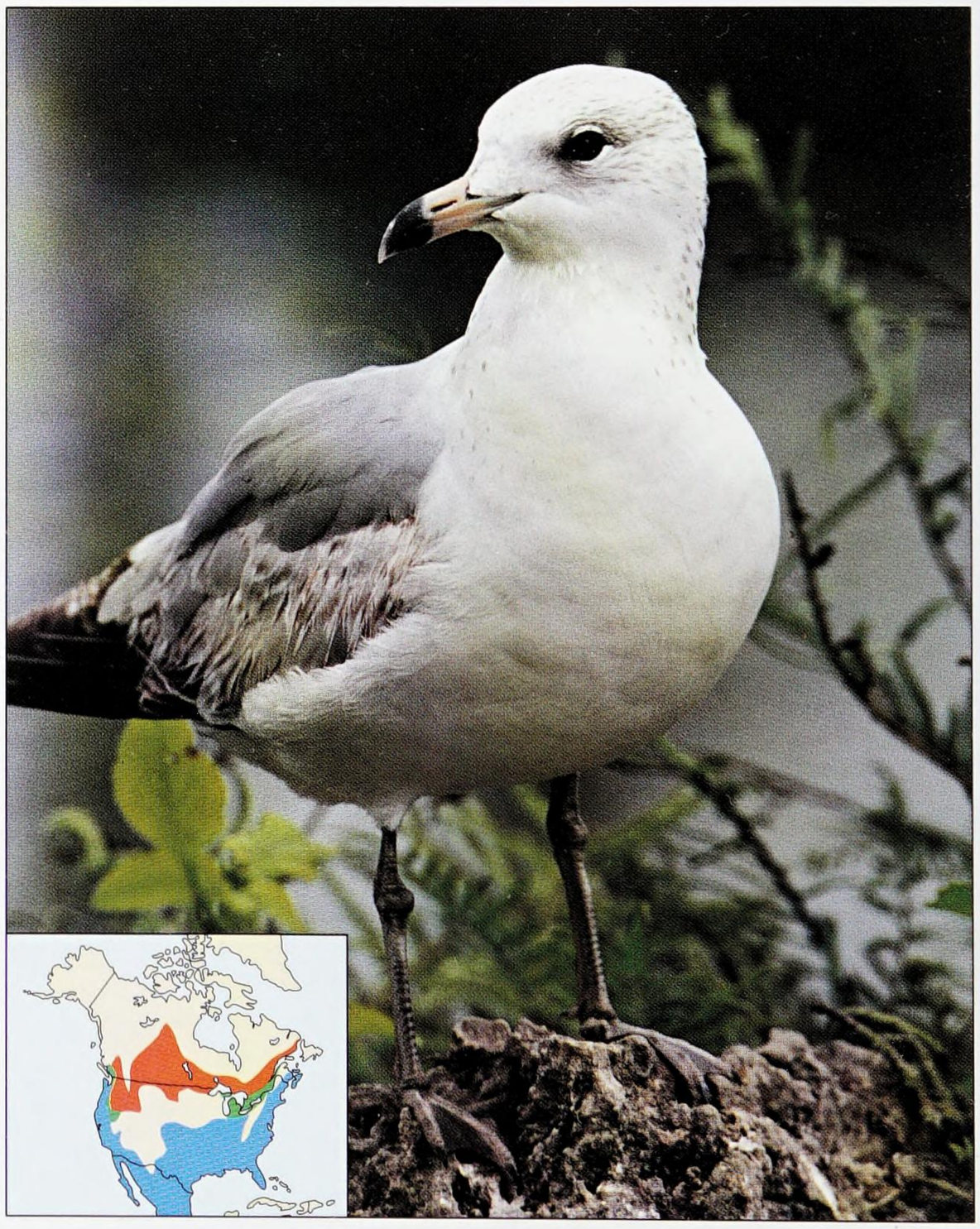
Scientific name: *Larus argentatus*
Length: 25 inches, wingspan 57 inches
Habitat: Coastal areas, large lakes, landfills, fishing docks
Identification: Large seabird with heavy yellow bill marked in red. Average mature bird has white head and neck in summer, neck extensively streaked brown in winter, gray back, white underparts, black wing tips spotted with white, pink legs and feet
Similar species: Plumage and size of the Herring Gull is very variable at all ages, so it can be mistaken for several other large gulls

Since the Herring Gull will eat almost anything, its population is expanding in many areas and driving out weaker species. It breeds in large colonies on islets or cliffs, building a nest of seaweed or grass on the ground to hold 2 or 3 bluish or olive, dark-blotched eggs. The juvenile bird takes 4 years to reach mature plumage, but all stages are quite variable so it can be difficult to identify. By its 1st winter it has a pale face and throat, dark patterning on its back, and a black bill with pink at the base. By the 2nd winter its back is pale gray, wings brown, and the bill is pinkish with a black tip. The 3rd winter bird is much like the adult, but the yellow bill has a black patch. The adult has a white head and neck, a heavy yellow bill marked with a red spot, pale eyes with a red orbital ring, a gray back, white underparts, and pink legs and feet. In winter, its neck is streaked brown and the red bill spot turns dusky. Its wings are gray, with a narrow band of white along the trailing edge and black wing tips with white spots. The Herring Gull scavenges on garbage dumps and in harbors, but also catches fish and small crustaceans.

Ring-billed Gull

Scientific name: *Larus delawarensis*
Length: 17½ inches, wingspan 48 inches
Habitat: Beaches, inland water
Identification: Medium-size gull with heavy yellow bill ringed in black. Mature bird has white head and neck in summer, nape washed brown in winter, pale gray back, white underparts, black wing tips with white spot, yellow legs and feet
Similar species: Mew Gull lacks black ring on bill. Herring Gull may have pale ring in winter, but has pinkish legs and heavier streaking on neck. California Gull larger, has darker eye, red and black on bill, in flight has much more extensive black on wing tip

An abundant and widespread gull, the Ring-billed breeds in large colonies, often with the California Gull, building a nest of grass and stems on the ground to hold 3 buff, dark-splotched eggs. The juvenile takes 3 years to reach mature plumage, but by its 1st winter has a gray back and is white beneath scaled and spotted in brown, with a brown streaked head and a pink bill with a black tip. Its wings are brown with black-brown tips and pale wing linings. By the 2nd winter it is much like the adult, but its tail is spotted in black across the tip and its bill ring is wider. The adult has a white head and neck, a yellow bill ringed in black, pale eyes with a red orbital ring, a pale gray back, white underparts, and yellow legs and feet. In winter, its nape is washed brown. Its wings are gray above, with white along the trailing edge and beneath, and black wing tips with a small white spot. The Ring-billed Gull eats worms, mollusks, insects and grasshoppers; it also scavenges near urban areas.



California Gull

Scientific name: *Larus californicus*
Length: 21 inches, wingspan 54 inches
Habitat: Marshes, prairie lakes, coastal areas
Identification: Medium-size gull with heavy yellow bill marked in black and red. Mature bird has white head and neck in summer, nape streaked brown in winter, gray back, white underparts, black wing tips with a touch of white, yellow legs and feet
Similar species: Herring Gull is larger with pinkish legs and extensive streaking on neck. Ringed-bill Gull is smaller, has pale eye, black ring on bill, in flight has white spot on black wing tip

The California Gull is famous for devouring a swarm of locusts and so saving the Mormon settlers' first crop. Its range is more limited than some other gulls, as it spends the summer on western prairie lakes and marshes and winters along the Pacific coast. It breeds in large colonies on lake islands, often with the Ring-billed Gull, building a nest of weeds, grass and sticks on the ground to hold 2 or 3 buff-olive, dark-splotched eggs. These are incubated by both parents for around 3-4 weeks. The California Gull takes 4 years to reach its mature plumage. The juvenile bird is usually pale below with a brown back, pinkish legs and a black bill, but by its 1st winter it has some gray on its back and a pinkish bill with a black tip. Its wings are brown with double dark stripes and pale wing linings; the tail is dark brown. By the 2nd winter its back is mostly gray, its chest and belly are whitish, the legs are grayish. The 3rd winter bird is much like the adult, but the yellowish bill has more black and the wings and tail still have some brown. The breeding adult has a white head and neck, a heavy yellow bill marked with black and red, dark eyes with a red orbital ring, a gray back, white underparts, and yellow legs and feet. In winter, its nape is streaked brown. In flight, its wings are gray above, with a narrow band of white along the trailing edge and whitish underneath, and extensive black wing tips with a small white spot. The California Gull catches fish, but also eats insect larvae, grasshoppers and small rodents - which makes it popular with farmers.





Arctic Tern

Scientific name:	*Sterna paradisaea*
Length:	15½ inches, wingspan 31 inches
Habitat:	Offshore, tundra lakes, coastal beaches
Identification:	Medium-size short-legged sea bird, long forked tail. Breeding adult has black cap, red bill, gray body, pale beneath, long wings with dark below on tips of primaries
Similar species:	Arctic, Common and Forster's terns almost identical, but Common Tern has longer legs, shorter tail and red bill tipped black, Forster's has silvery primaries and more orange bill

The Arctic Tern inhabits a different range to the Common, being found in the summer in the far north and northwest, although the two species do overlap in the northeast. The Arctic Tern migrates well offshore to winter near Antarctica. It nests in colonies or single pairs on tundra lakes and beaches, laying 2 or more olive-brown eggs with brown spotting in a scrape in sand or gravel, which may be lined with plant matter. These are incubated by both birds for around 3 weeks, and the young chicks fly around 3-4 weeks later. The Arctic Tern takes 3 years to reach its mature plumage. The juvenile is gray-white with a white breast and forehead, blackish nape and crown and mostly dark bill, but by the 1st winter it is gray above, with a large black patch on the head, a slightly darker shoulder bar and a dark bill. By the 2nd winter it is much like the adult, with a white forehead, and a dark patch on the crown and back of the head. In the breeding season the adult has a black cap, a red bill, the upperparts are gray, and the breast and belly pale. In flight, its long wings are even gray, with a darker gray line along the tips of the primaries on the underwing. The Arctic Tern fiercely attacks and mobs any intruders on its breeding grounds. It eats fish and small crustaceans.

Forster's Tern

Scientific name: *Sterna forsteri*
Length: 14½ inches, wingspan 31 inches
Habitat: Marshes, beaches
Identification: Medium-size short-legged water bird, long forked tail. Breeding adult has black cap, orange bill with black tip, pale gray body, white beneath, long wings with silvery-white primaries
Similar species: Forster's, Common and Arctic terns almost identical. Forster's has longer legs, Arctic Tern has longer tail and all-red bill, Common has dark wedge on upper wing and redder bill

The summer range of Forster's Tern overlaps part of that of the Common Tern, but it is also found further south and in the west. It nests in colonies in marshes or on beaches, laying 3-4 buffy, spotted eggs in marsh grasses, in a scrape on sand or on a floating platform of vegetation. These are incubated by both adults for around 24 days, and the young chicks fly about 4 weeks after hatching. The juvenile takes 3 years to reach mature plumage; in its first summer it is gingery-brown with a white breast and forehead and a blackish eye patch, but by the winter it is grayer above, with dark gray on the wing tips. By the 2nd winter it is much like the winter adult, with a white head, black bill, dark eye patch and dark streaks on the nape; the wings are more silvery-white. In the breeding season the adult has a black cap, an orange bill with a black tip, the upperparts are pale gray, and the breast and belly snow-white. In flight, its long wings are pale gray with silvery-white primary feathers, its tail is pale gray with little contrast to the white rump. Forster's Tern plunges into the water to catch fish, and also eats insects.

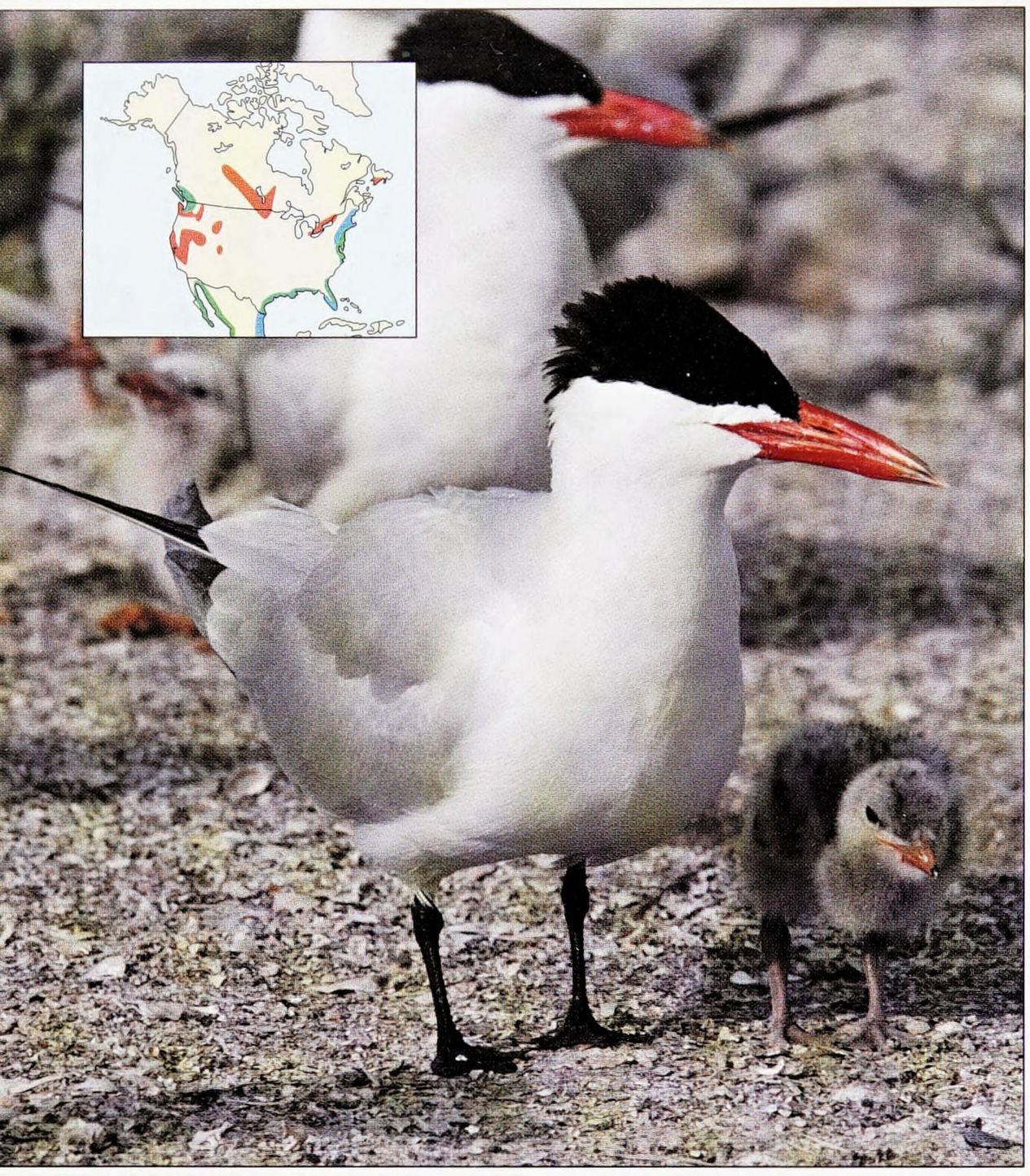


Common Tern

Scientific name: *Sterna hirundo*
Length: 14½ inches, wingspan 30 inches
Habitat: Beaches, islands
Identification: Medium-size short-legged water bird, long forked tail. Breeding adult has black cap, red bill with black tip, gray body, pale beneath, long wings with dark wedge at tip
Similar species: Common, Arctic and Forster's terns almost identical. Arctic Tern has shorter legs, longer tail and all-red bill, Forster's has silvery primaries and more orange bill

The most widespread and numerous of the North American terns, the Common Tern breeds across much of Canada and northern America and winters in the Southern Hemisphere. It nests in large colonies on sandbars, beaches or islands, laying 2-3 green to buff eggs with brown markings in a scrape on open ground. These are incubated by both male and female for around 24 days, and the young chicks fly around 4 weeks later. The Common Tern takes 3 years to reach its mature plumage. The juvenile is brownish with a white breast and forehead, blackish nape and orange bill, but by the 1st winter it is gray above, with a black patch on the head, dark bill, dark shoulder bar and brownish wings. By the 2nd winter it has less brown and more gray on the wings. In the breeding season the adult has a black cap, a red bill with a black tip, the upperparts are gray, and the breast and belly pale. In winter, its forehead is white with a dark patch on the crown and back of the head, and a dark shoulder bar. In flight, its long wings are gray with a darker gray wedge towards the tip of the upper wing. The Common Tern flies slowly over water, diving to catch fish or other aquatic prey.





Caspian Tern

Scientific name:	*Sterna caspia*
Length:	21 inches, wingspan 50 inches
Habitat:	Coastal areas, wetlands, inland water
Identification:	Large, broad-winged bird, short notched tail. Breeding adult has black cap, large red bill, pale gray body, white beneath
Similar species:	Royal Tern has thinner, more orange bill and a wispy crest, underside of wings much paler at tip

Almost as big as a gull, the Caspian Tern is the largest of the tern family and is seen in small numbers across much of North America - it is the only large tern that is seen inland. It spends the summer in scattered colonies in Canada, western America and along the southern Pacific and much of the Atlantic coasts; northern birds migrate further south in the winter. It nests in wetlands and in some coastal areas, laying 2 to 4 largish, pinky-buff eggs marked with dark brown in a scrape that may be lined with grass. These are incubated by both birds for around 3 weeks, and the young chicks begin to fly about 3-4 weeks after hatching. The adult bird is broad-winged with a short notched tail and a large, thick, red bill. The juvenile is gray-white above, white beneath, with a dark crown streaked with white on the forehead, and dark primaries on the underside of the wing. The winter adult is gray above, white beneath and its dark cap is streaked with white on the forehead and crown; it has some dark gray under the wing tip. In the breeding season the adult has a black cap. The Caspian Tern usually forages alone, flying high and diving into the water to catch fish. It may also rob other birds' nests.

Gull-billed Tern

Scientific name:	*Sterna nilotica*
Length:	14 inches, wingspan 34 inches
Habitat:	Salt marshes, beaches, fields
Identification:	Medium-size long-legged sea bird, short forked tail. Breeding adult has black cap, thick black bill, pale gray body, white beneath, long wings
Similar species:	Resembles Forster's Tern but has longer legs, thick black bill

The Gull-billed Tern is fairly common within its North American range. In summer it can be found along much of the Atlantic coast, and the rest of the year around the Gulf and Salton Sea. It breeds in scattered colonies over salt marshes and on beaches, laying 3 to 5 buffy eggs marked with brown in a scrape that may be lined with shells, pebbles or grass. These are incubated by both birds for around 3 weeks, and the young chicks begin to fly about 4-5 weeks after hatching. The juvenile is plain gray with white edging above, white beneath, and a brownish bill. The winter adult has a white head with fine dark streaking, a black bill, dark gray eye patch and whitish wings with darker gray on the primaries. In the breeding season the adult has a black cap, a short, thick black bill, the upper-parts are pale silvery-gray, and the breast and belly white. All ages have black legs and feet. In flight, its long wings are pale gray, and its tail is not as forked as that of Forster's Tern. The Gull-billed Tern catches insects in flight as they swarm over fields and marshland. It also eats frogs, small crustaceans and fish - although it never dives below the surface of the water to catch them.



Royal Tern

Scientific name:	*Sterna maxima*
Length:	20 inches, wingspan 41 inches
Habitat:	Coastal marshes, beaches
Identification:	Large, slender sea bird, shallow forked tail. Breeding adult has black cap with wispy crest, large orange-red bill, pale gray body, white beneath
Similar species:	Caspian Tern has thicker, redder bill, underside of wings darker at tip. Elegant Tern is smaller, with a much slimmer bill that appears to droop

The Royal Tern is fairly common around the southern coastlines of North America, but is rare further north and inland. It breeds in huge, dense colonies, sometimes containing tens of thousands of birds, on sandbars and flat islands. It does not build a nest, but lays 1-2 variably colored eggs in a simple scrape in the sand, which are incubated by both birds for around 4 weeks. After hatching, the young chicks are gathered together into large groups until they begin to fly 3-4 weeks later; they may stay with the parent birds for several more weeks. The adult bird is slender and streamlined with a shallow forked tail, a wispy crest on the back of the head, a large, thick, orange-red bill and dark legs. The juvenile is gray-white above, white beneath, with a dark crown, streaked white forehead, and yellow legs; in flight it shows obvious dark bars on the upper wings and darkish primaries underneath. The winter adult (*below*) is gray above, white beneath and has a dark band around the back of the head, beginning behind its dark eyes, and a white face and forehead; it has a small amount of gray under the wings on the primaries. Early in the breeding season the adult has a black cap. The Royal Tern plunges into the sea to catch fish and squid.





Elegant Tern

Scientific name:	*Sterna elegans*
Length:	17 inches, wingspan 34 inches
Habitat:	Coastal areas
Identification:	Large, slender sea bird, forked tail. Breeding adult has black cap with longish crest, long thin orange-red bill, pale gray body, white beneath
Similar species:	Royal Tern is larger, with a much thicker bill

Mainly found in southern California, the Elegant Tern sometimes wanders as far north as Washington in late summer, but is a coastal bird that is rarely found inland. Most birds spend the winter in the Southern Hemisphere, but a few do stay in California. It nests in colonies on islands, which sometimes contain hundreds of birds, laying 1-2 variably colored eggs in a simple scrape in the sand. These are incubated by both birds and after hatching the young chicks stay near the nest. The adult bird is slender with a forked tail, a longish drooping crest on the back of the head, a long, slim, orange-red bill that appears to droop and dark legs. The juvenile is gray above, white beneath, with a dark crown extending over the eye and a white forehead; its bill is yellowish as are its legs. The winter adult is gray above, white beneath and has a dark band around the back of the head, extending around its eyes, and a white forehead. In flight, its wings are mostly pale on the underside of the primaries. For a short period early in the breeding season, the adult has a black cap and its white belly may be pinkish. The Elegant Tern dives to catch fish, and the male presents small fish to the female as part of the courtship ritual.

Least Tern

Scientific name: *Sterna antillarum*
Length: 9 inches, wingspan 20 inches
Habitat: Beaches, river sandbars
Identification: Small, long-winged sea bird, short forked tail. Breeding adult has black cap and nape with white forehead, long thin yellow bill tipped black, gray body, white beneath, yellow feet
Similar species: Small size and yellow bill are distinctive

The smallest of the North American terns, the Least Tern is seen only in summer, as it spends the winter in South America and other areas of the Southern Hemisphere. In North America, it is found around the southern Atlantic and Pacific coasts, although its numbers are declining due to loss of habitat. It breeds in colonies on sandbars and beaches, often with other terns, laying 2-3 light-buff eggs, speckled dark brown, in a shallow scrape in the sand. These are incubated by both birds for around 3 weeks, and after hatching, the young chicks stay near the nest until they begin to fly about 2-3 weeks later. The adult bird is small, with a short, forked tail, a long, thin, tapering yellow bill with black on the very tip, and yellow legs. The juvenile is faintly barred gray-white above, white beneath, with a darkish crown and bill, and a dark shoulder bar; in flight it shows dark stripes forming a W across the upper wings and back. The winter adult is gray above, white beneath and has a dark nape and a white crown and forehead. The breeding adult has a black cap and nape, but retains the white forehead. The Least Tern feeds on small fish and crustaceans.



Sandwich Tern

Scientific name: *Sterna sandvicensis*
Length: 15 inches, wingspan 34 inches
Habitat: Coastal beaches and islands
Identification: Medium-size, slender sea bird, shortish deeply-forked tail. Breeding adult has black cap with wispy crest, long thin black bill, pale gray body, white beneath
Similar species: Often nests with Royal Tern, which is bigger, with darker gray upperparts and thick, orange-red bill

The Sandwich Tern is found only around the southern Atlantic and Gulf coasts and is often seen with the Royal Tern, although it is much less common. It breeds in large colonies along with the Royal, on sandbars and flat islands. It does not build a nest, but lays 1-2 pinkish-buff eggs, often spotted brown-gray, in a simple scrape in the sand. These are incubated by both birds for around 3-4 weeks, and after hatching, the young chicks are gathered together into large groups with Royal Tern chicks until they begin to fly about 5 weeks later. The adult bird is medium-size and slender, with a shortish, deeply-forked tail, a wispy crest on the back of the head, a long thin black bill with a pale yellowish tip, and dark legs. The juvenile is mottled gray-white above, white beneath, with a dark crown, streaked white forehead, and dark legs; in flight it shows faint bars on the upper wings. The winter adult is pale gray above, white beneath and has a dark band around the back of the head, beginning behind its eyes, a white face and forehead, and a gray tail. Early in the breeding season the adult has a black cap. Like the Royal, the Sandwich Tern plunges into the sea to catch fish and squid; it also eats shrimp.



Brown Noddy

Scientific name: *Anous stolidus*
Length: 15½ inches, wingspan 32 inches
Habitat: Warm ocean water
Identification: Medium-size, long-billed, long-tailed, water bird. Breeding adult mostly dark gray-brown, with whitish cap, dark legs and feet
Similar species: Size and plumage distinctive, but rare Black Noddies sometimes appear, a separate species with darker plumage and smaller in size

Noddies are tropical terns, and the Brown Noddy is only found in North America around southern Florida, although stray birds may find their way west as far as Texas and east to North Carolina. It breeds on Dry Tortugas in the Gulf of Mexico off Florida, laying 1 buffy-white or pinkish egg, spotted gray-brown, in a nest of twigs and seaweed on the ground or in a shrub or tree. The eggs are incubated by both birds for around 5-6 weeks, the young chicks begin to fly about 6-7 weeks later. The adult bird is medium-size, with a long, wedge-shaped tail, a long, black bill, and dark legs. Its plumage is mostly dark gray-brown, with a whitish cap, although the juvenile may only have a narrow whitish line on the forehead. The Brown Noddy swoops over the water, dipping to catch small fish and squid.



Black Tern

Scientific name: *Chlidonias niger*
Length: 9¾ inches, wingspan 24 inches
Habitat: Lake shores, freshwater marshes
Identification: Small, short-tailed, water bird. Breeding adult mostly black, with dark gray back, wings and tail, white undertail coverts, short black bill, dark legs and feet
Similar species: Size and plumage distinctive

Only slightly larger than the Least, the Black Tern is also only seen in summer but is more of an inland bird. It is very rarely seen on the west coast, and only on a small part of the east, and spends the winter in the Southern Hemisphere. It breeds in small, dense colonies on lakeshores and in freshwater marshes, laying 2-3 buff eggs, blotched with brown, in a nest constructed of marsh vegetation and usually floating. The eggs are incubated by both birds for around 3 weeks, and after hatching, the young chicks stay in the nest until they begin to fly about 2-3 weeks later. The adult bird is small, with a short, slightly forked tail, a short, black bill, and dark legs. The winter adult and the juvenile are dark gray above, white beneath, with a dark crown and ear patch, and a dark shoulder bar. The breeding adult is mostly black, with dark gray back, wings and tail, and white undertail coverts; in flight it shows a pale gray underwing and darker gray upper wing. The Black Tern circles and hovers buoyantly above water, dipping to catch flying insects, small fish and crustaceans. Populations have declined in many areas, probably due to loss of habitat.



Black Skimmer

Scientific name: *Rynchops niger*
Length: 18 inches, wingspan 44 inches
Habitat: Beaches, offshore
Identification: Large, long-winged, sea bird with lower bill longer than upper. Adult black back and crown, white below, white nape turns black in summer, red legs, red bill tipped black
Similar species: No other bird has the lower bill longer than the upper

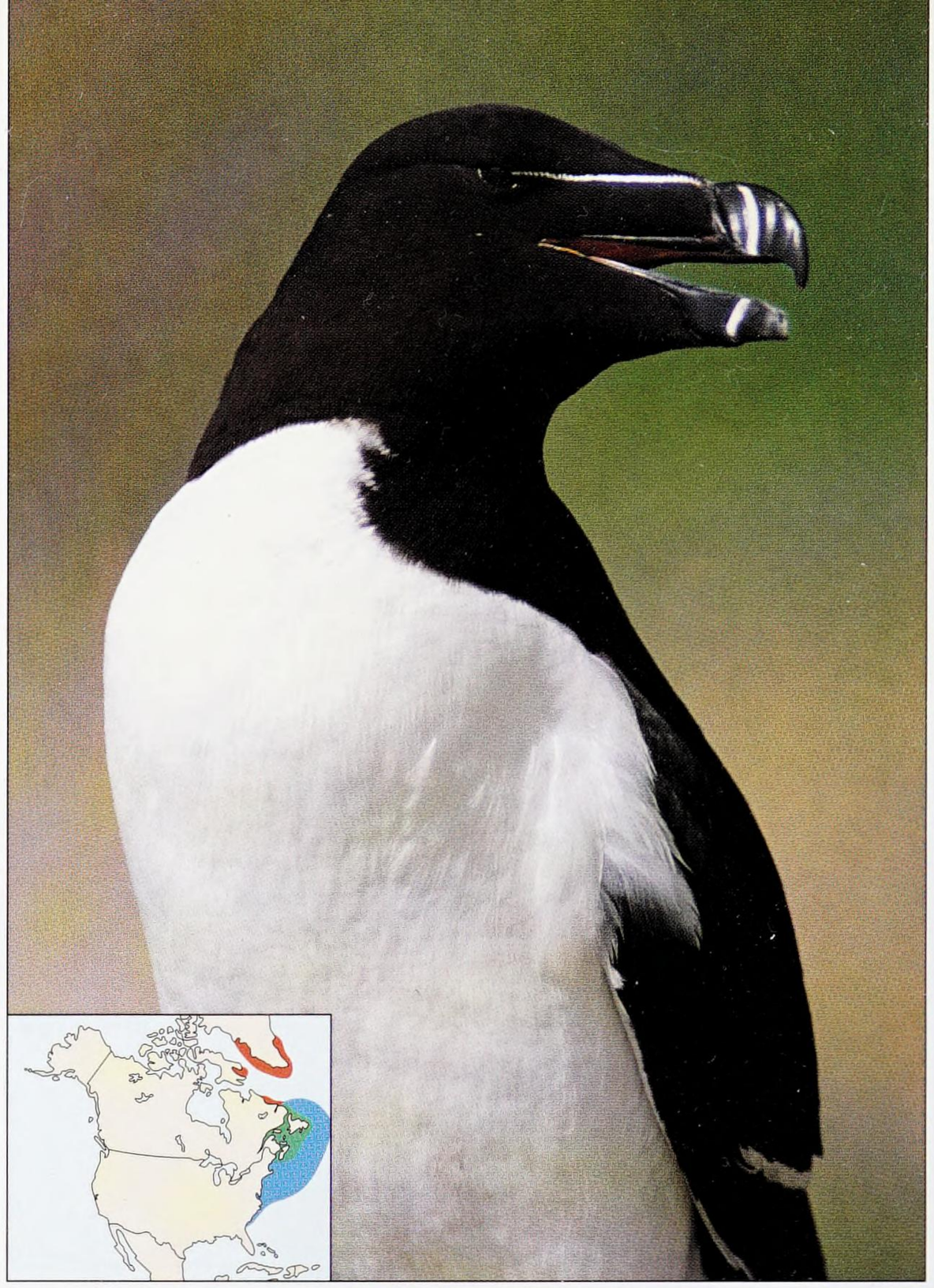
A coastal bird, the Black Skimmer is found around the southern Atlantic and Pacific throughout most of the year, but ranges northwards as far as New Hampshire in summer. It rarely moves inland, except when coastal waters are too rough, but is sometimes seen over quiet, shallow water. A relative of the tern, it breeds on sandy beaches, nesting in colonies and laying up to 5 cream or bluish eggs, often spotted with brown-gray, in a scrape in the sand. The young stay near the nest for some time after hatching. The adult bird has an unusual red bill tipped with black in which the lower mandible is much longer than the upper, long and rather broad wings, and red legs and feet. It is mostly black above, with a black crown, and white beneath; in the breeding season its white nape also turns black. The female bird is much smaller than the male; the juvenile is mottled gray-brown above and white beneath. The Black Skimmer flies gracefully and buoyantly, with long, slow beats, holding its head lower than its tail and showing white wing linings with darker tips. When feeding - usually at night - it flies just above the surface of the water, with its long lower mandible slicing the surface, until it finds a small fish or crustacean, which it catches by snapping shut the upper bill.



Razorbill

Scientific name:	*Alca torda*
Length:	17 inches
Habitat:	Cliffs, rocky ground, offshore
Identification:	Large, chunky sea bird, short deep black bill with white band. Breeding adult black above, white beneath, white line from eye to bill
Similar species:	Resembles Thick-billed Murre, but can be distinguished by thicker bill with white band, shorter neck

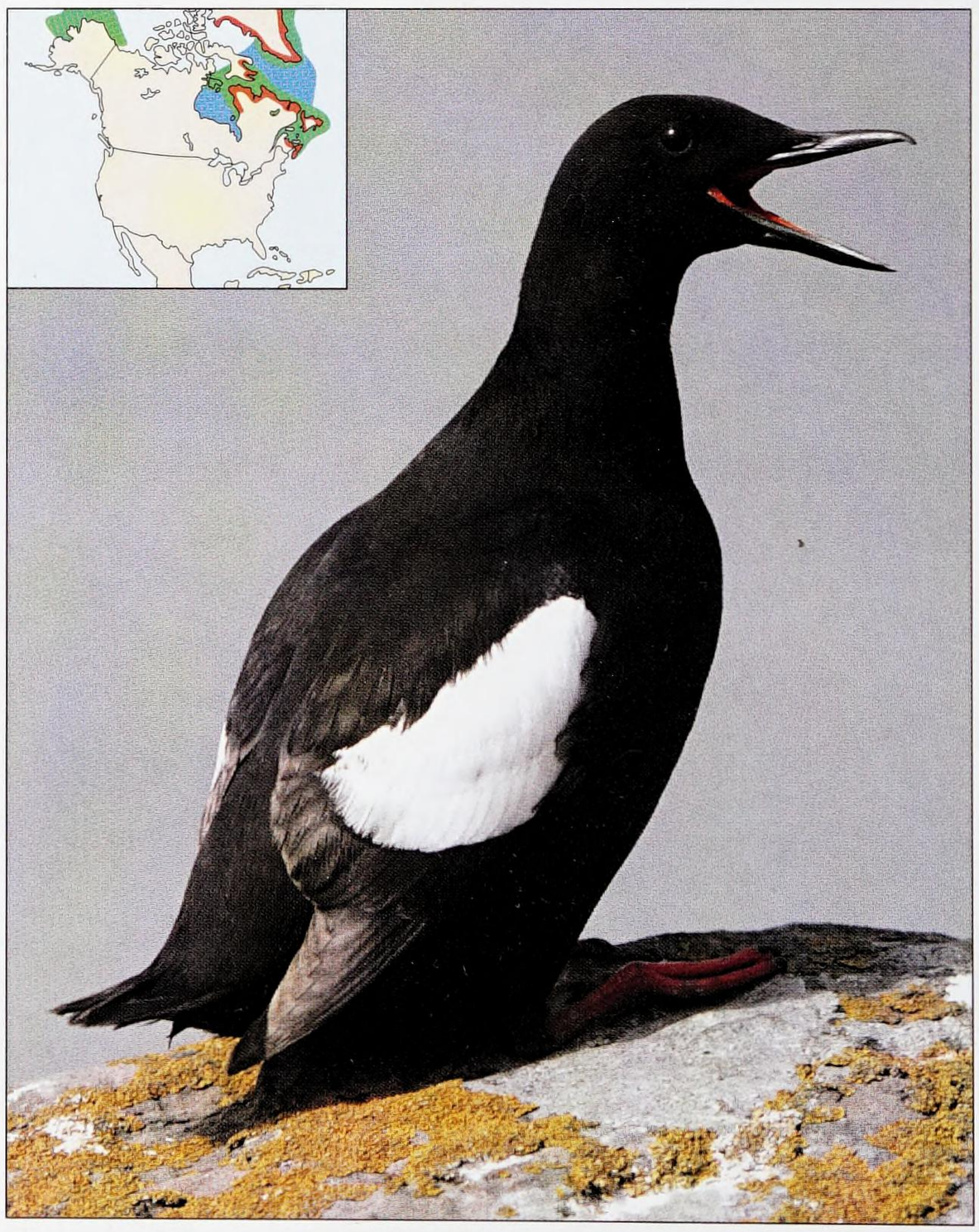
The Razorbill is an Atlantic sea coast bird, which is found in large numbers around Newfoundland all year round, and ranges as far north as Greenland in summer, and offshore down to North Carolina in winter. It nests in colonies on rocky cliffs and amongst boulders, laying a single greeny-blue, dark-spotted egg on a ledge or on the ground. This is incubated by both adult birds for 5-6 weeks and the young chicks leave the nest around 2 weeks later, but stay with the parents for some time. The adult bird is large and chunky, with a big head, a short, thick neck, and a short, deep black bill with a single white band. It has a longish, pointed tail, which it often carries pointed upwards when swimming. Its plumage is black above and white beneath, and in the summer breeding season it has a thin white line from eye to bill. The juvenile is very similar to the adult, but lacks the white bill band. The Razorbill dives for food, sometimes reaching as far as 60 feet below the surface as it hunts for fish, shrimp and squid.



Black Guillemot

Scientific name:	*Cepphus grylle*
Length:	13 inches
Habitat:	Rocky shores, offshore
Identification:	Medium-size, chunky sea bird, with broad rounded wings. Breeding adult all black, except for large white patch on upper wing. Winter adult white, with black mottled back
Similar species:	Pigeon Guillemot almost identical, but in breeding plumage usually has dark bar extending into wing patch. In flight, the Black Guillemot has white underwings edged in black, the Pigeon Guillemot has dark wing linings

A fairly common bird in many areas of the north, northeast and northwest Alaska, the Black Guillemot is a coastal bird which tends to stay near land, particularly in the breeding season. It nests in colonies on rocky shores, laying 1-2 dull white or greenish, dark-spotted eggs in a rocky crevice on the ground. These are incubated by both adult birds for 3-4 weeks and the young chicks leave the nest around 5-6 weeks later, but stay with the parents for some time. The adult bird is a medium-size, chunky bird, with broad, rounded wings and red feet. The breeding adult is all black, except for a large oval white patch on the upper wing. The winter adult is mostly white, with its back heavily mottled with black and a whitish head. The juvenile is similar to the winter adult, but its head is more mottled and its white wing patch is barred with black. In flight, the Black Guillemot has white underwings edged in black, which are distinctive in all plumages. It is often seen sitting on open rocks, and eats fish, shrimp, mollusks and squid.



Pigeon Guillemot

Scientific name: *Cepphus columba*
Length: 13½ inches
Habitat: Rocky shores, offshore
Identification: Medium-size, chunky sea bird, with broad rounded wings. Breeding adult all black, except for large white patch on upper wing with dark bar extending into it. Winter adult white, with black mottled back
Similar species: Black Guillemot almost identical, but in breeding plumage lacks dark bar extending into wing patch. In flight, the Black Guillemot has white underwings edged in black, the Pigeon Guillemot has dark wing linings

The Pigeon Guillemot inhabits a different range to the Black Guillemot, being found in the west and northwest - the two only overlap in northwest Alaska. Like the Black, the Pigeon Guillemot is a coastal bird that tends to stay near land in the breeding season. It nests in colonies on rocky shores, laying 1-2 greenish or dull white eggs, spotted with brown, in the crevice of a rock. These are incubated by both parent birds for 3-4 weeks and the young birds leave the nest 5-6 weeks later, but swim out to sea with the parents and stay with them for some time. The adult bird is a medium-size, chunky bird, with broad, rounded wings and red feet. In the breeding season (*below*) it is entirely black, except for a large, oval, white patch on the upper wing - usually with a black bar extending into it that may not be very evident on the swimming bird. The winter adult is mostly white, with its back and head heavily mottled with black. The juvenile is whitish but is also heavily mottled in black, and its white wing patch is barred with black. In flight, the Pigeon Guillemot has plain, dark underwings, which are very distinctive in all its plumages. It eats fish, shrimp, mollusks and squid.



Rhinoceros Auklet

Scientific name: *Cerorhinca monocerata*
Length: 15 inches
Habitat: Offshore
Identification: Medium-size, stout-billed sea bird. Breeding adult dark gray above, lighter gray throat and breast, white underparts, drooping white whisker each side, white plume above eye, short upright horn at base of bill. Winter adult lacks horn, white whisker and plume less evident
Similar species: Winter Tufted Puffin can look very similar, but has thicker, more orange-red bill and larger and more rounded head

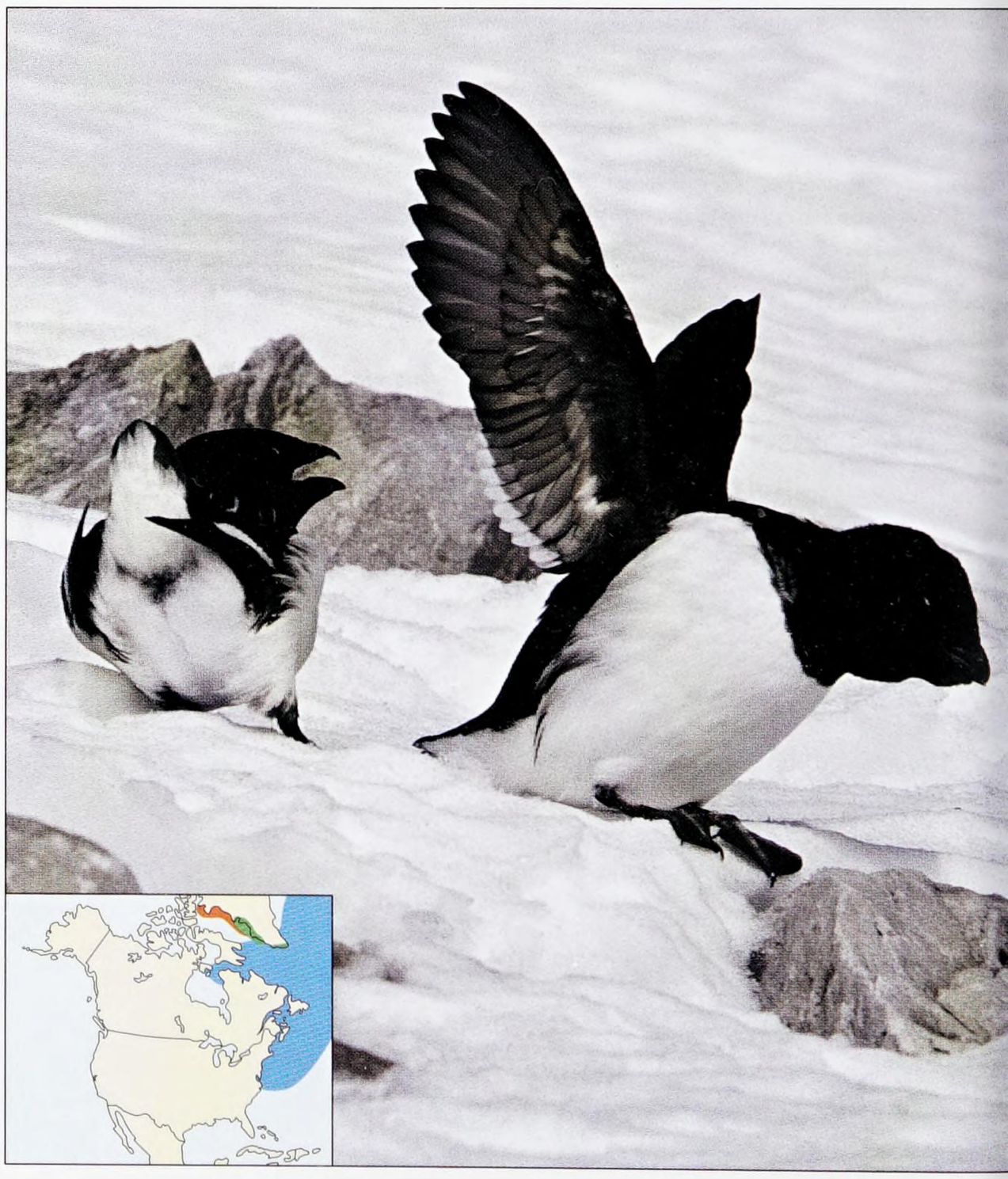
Despite its name, the Rhinoceros Auklet is more closely related to a puffin than to other auklets. It is quite common and is found along the Pacific coast of North America in great numbers. It breeds in large colonies, laying 1 white egg, often spotted with lilac-gray, at the end of a long burrow in soft earth. Both parent birds take it in turns to incubate the egg for up to 5 weeks; the chick stays in the burrow for about 6 weeks after hatching, then leaves to swim out to sea with the parents. The adult has a big, angular head on a short, thick neck and a stout yellow bill. The breeding adult is dark gray-black above, with a lighter gray throat and breast and white underparts; it has a drooping white plume on each side like a whisker, a white plume above the eye, and a short upright horn at the base of its bill. The winter adult lacks the horn, and the white whisker and plume are less evident. The Rhinoceros Auklet feeds on fish, which it catches offshore during the day; in the breeding season, it comes ashore at night to feed its chick.



Dovekie

Scientific name: *Alle alle*
Length: $8\frac{1}{4}$ inches
Habitat: Offshore, rocky crevices
Identification: Small, plump sea bird, with short neck and stubby bill. Breeding adult black above, white beneath, breeding adult has black breast
Similar species: Resembles a murre, but can be distinguished by its much smaller size

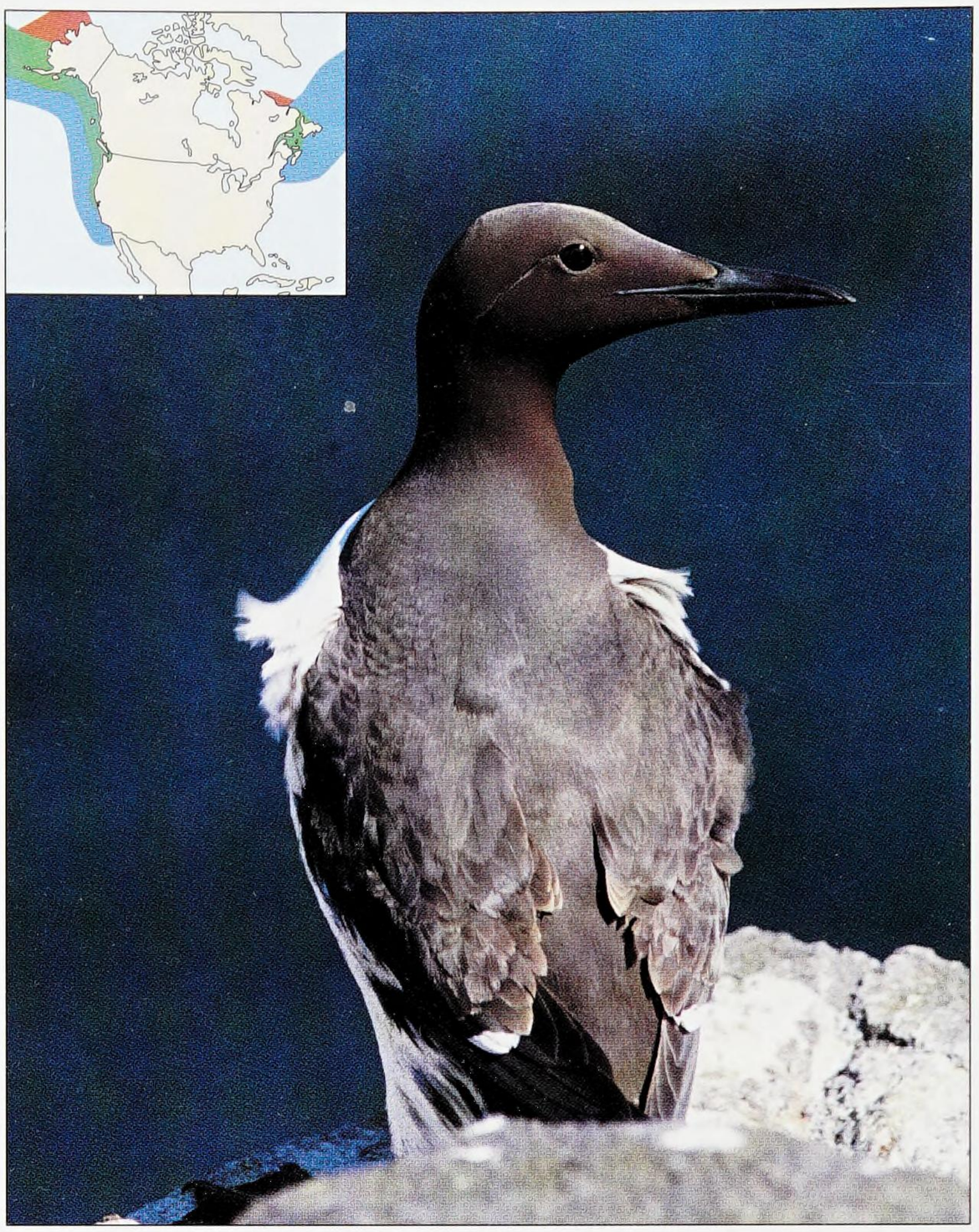
The Dovekie is the smallest of the Atlantic auks, and spends much of its life out over the open ocean although it comes ashore to breed on rocky cliffs. It is abundant on its breeding grounds, which are mainly around northern Greenland and Baffin Bay, and it spreads south as far as North Carolina in summer. A few are found all year round in the Bering Sea, off Alaska. The Dovekie nests in huge colonies on rocky cliffs and seacoasts, laying a single white egg in a crevice. This is incubated by both adult birds for around 3 weeks and the young chick leaves the nest around 4 weeks later, but swims with the parents for some time. The adult bird is small and plump, with a very short, thick neck and a stubby bill. It swims tilted forward with its head held low, which makes it appear as if it has no neck. Its plumage is black above and white beneath, with the white curving up behind the eye; in the summer breeding season it has a black upper breast and face. In flight, it has dark wing linings. The juvenile is very similar to the winter adult. The Dovekie fishes for small crustaceans and fish, but other sea birds and Arctic foxes prey on its young to feed their own.



Common Murre

Scientific name: *Uria aalge*
Length: 17½ inches
Habitat: Rocky cliffs, offshore
Identification: Large, slender sea bird, long straight pointed black bill. Breeding adult black, white belly and chest. In winter throat is white with a dark line from eye across cheek
Similar species: Resembles Thick-billed Murre, but has thinner bill; in winter white of chest is rounded while that of Thick-billed comes up in a point

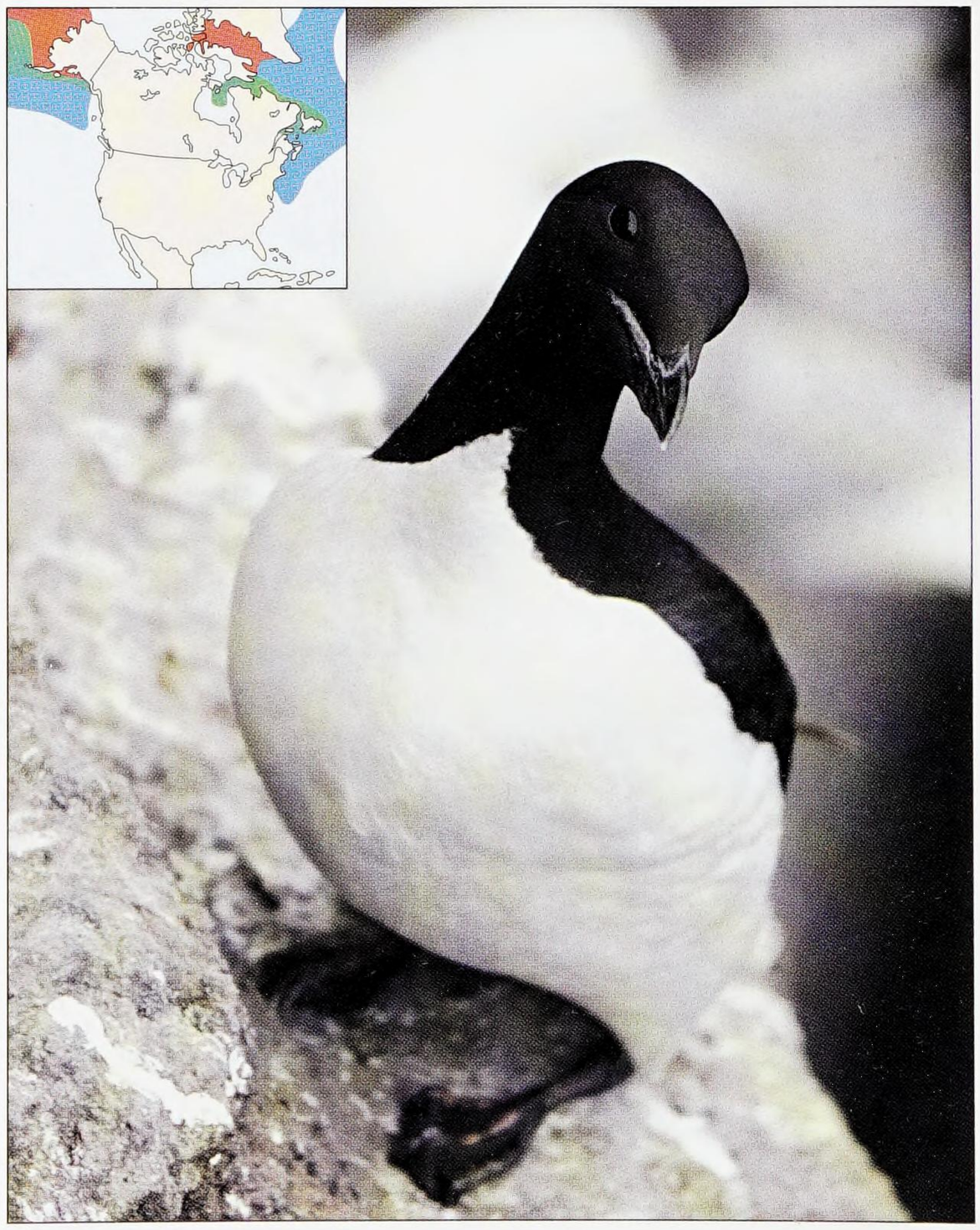
Murres are the largest surviving North American auks. The Common Murre is numerous off both the east and west coasts, and may be seen in winter in large flocks or small groups. In summer it nests in close-packed colonies on rocky cliffs, laying a single greeny-blue, buffy or white, dark-spotted egg on a ledge; the egg is very pear-shaped, so it rolls in a tight semicircle rather than off the ledge. It is incubated by both adult birds for 4-5 weeks and the young chick leaves the nest around 3-4 weeks later, jumping 30-50 feet into the sea to swim off with its parents. The adult bird is large and slender, with a slender head and thin neck, and a long straight pointed black bill. In summer its plumage is black, with a white belly and chest. In winter the throat, neck and part of the face are white, with a dark line from the eye across the cheek. The juvenile is very similar to the winter adult. In flight, the Common Murre has dark upperwings and whitish wing linings with dusky markings. It dives to catch small fish, shrimp and squid.



Thick-billed Murre

Scientific name: *Uria lomvia*
Length: 18 inches
Habitat: Rocky cliffs, offshore
Identification: Large, stocky sea bird, fairly short arched black bill. Breeding adult black, white belly and chest. In winter throat is white
Similar species: Resembles Common Murre, but has shorter thicker bill; in winter white of chest comes up in a point while that of Thick-billed is rounded

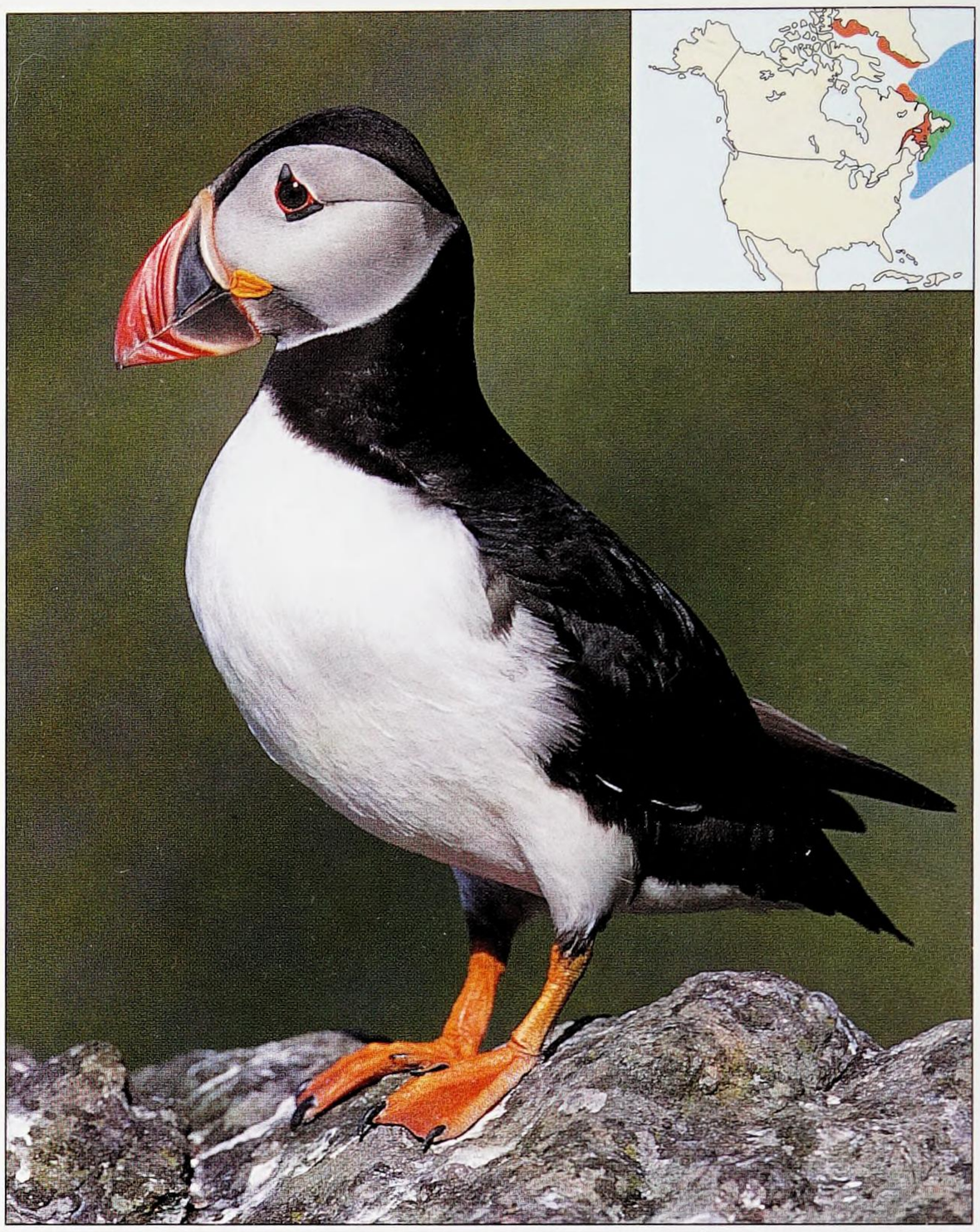
Slightly larger than the Common Murre, the Thick-billed inhabits much the same range, although it is found across more of the east coast and less of the west. In summer it is abundant in the Arctic, nesting in huge colonies on rocky cliffs and laying a single greenish, dark-spotted egg on a ledge. This is incubated by both adult birds for 4-5 weeks and the young chick leaves the nest around 3 weeks later, often jumping many feet down into the sea to swim off to the open ocean with its parents. The adult bird is large and stocky, with a squarer head and thicker neck, and a fairly short black bill arched at the tip, which often shows a thin white line along the edge of the upper mandible. In summer its plumage is black, with a white belly and chest, rising to a point on the lower neck. In winter the throat is white. The juvenile is very similar to the winter adult. In flight, the Thick-billed Murre has dark upperwings and clean white wing linings. It dives to catch small fish, shrimp and squid.



Atlantic Puffin

Scientific name: *Fratercula arctica*
Length: 12½ inches
Habitat: Offshore
Identification: Medium-size, massive-billed sea bird. Breeding adult black above, white beneath, white face, brightly-colored parrot-like bill. Winter adult gray face, bill smaller and duller
Similar species: The only puffin seen on the east coast

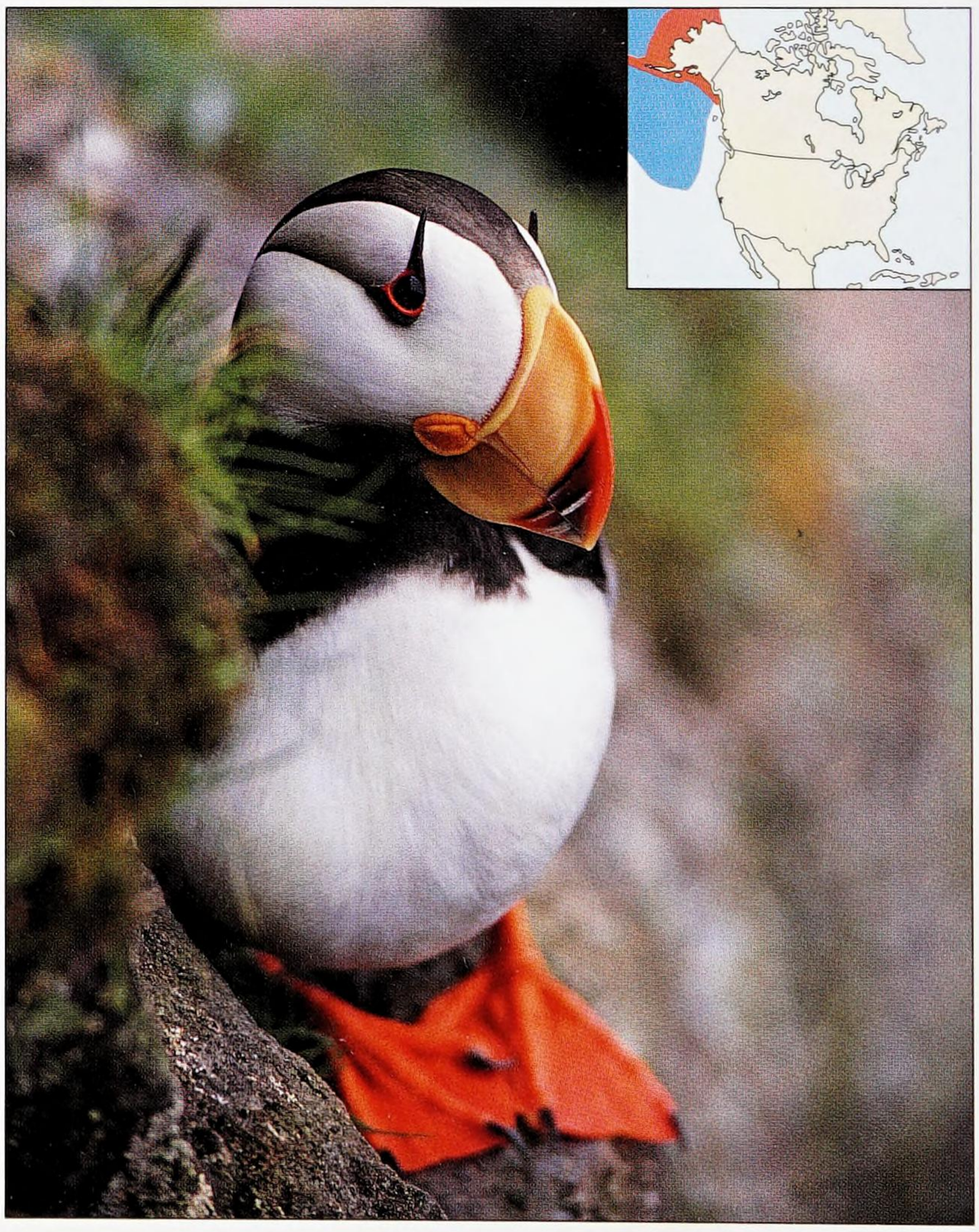
The Atlantic Puffin is the only puffin found on the Atlantic coast of North America - although it tends to stay in the north and only comes as far south as Virginia in winter, when it is usually well offshore. In summer it comes to land to nest in large colonies on offshore islands, where it is often seen sitting upright. It lays 1 white egg, sometimes spotted brown, usually at the end of a burrow in soft earth but sometimes in rock crevices. The female incubates the egg alone for 5-6 weeks, and the chicks are ready to leave the nest some 7 weeks later. The adult has a rounded head on a short neck, a stubby body with large, red-orange webbed feet and a thick, parrot-like bill. The breeding adult is black above and white beneath, with a white face and black collar, and a brightly-colored bill. In winter, the face turns gray and the bill is smaller and duller, having shed several brightly-coloured cover plates that will re-grow the following spring. The juvenile resembles the winter adult, but has a darker face and its bill is small and brownish; it takes five years to reach its full adult bill. The Atlantic Puffin dives for fish, "flying" gracefully underwater like the other puffins, and also eats mollusks and crustaceans.

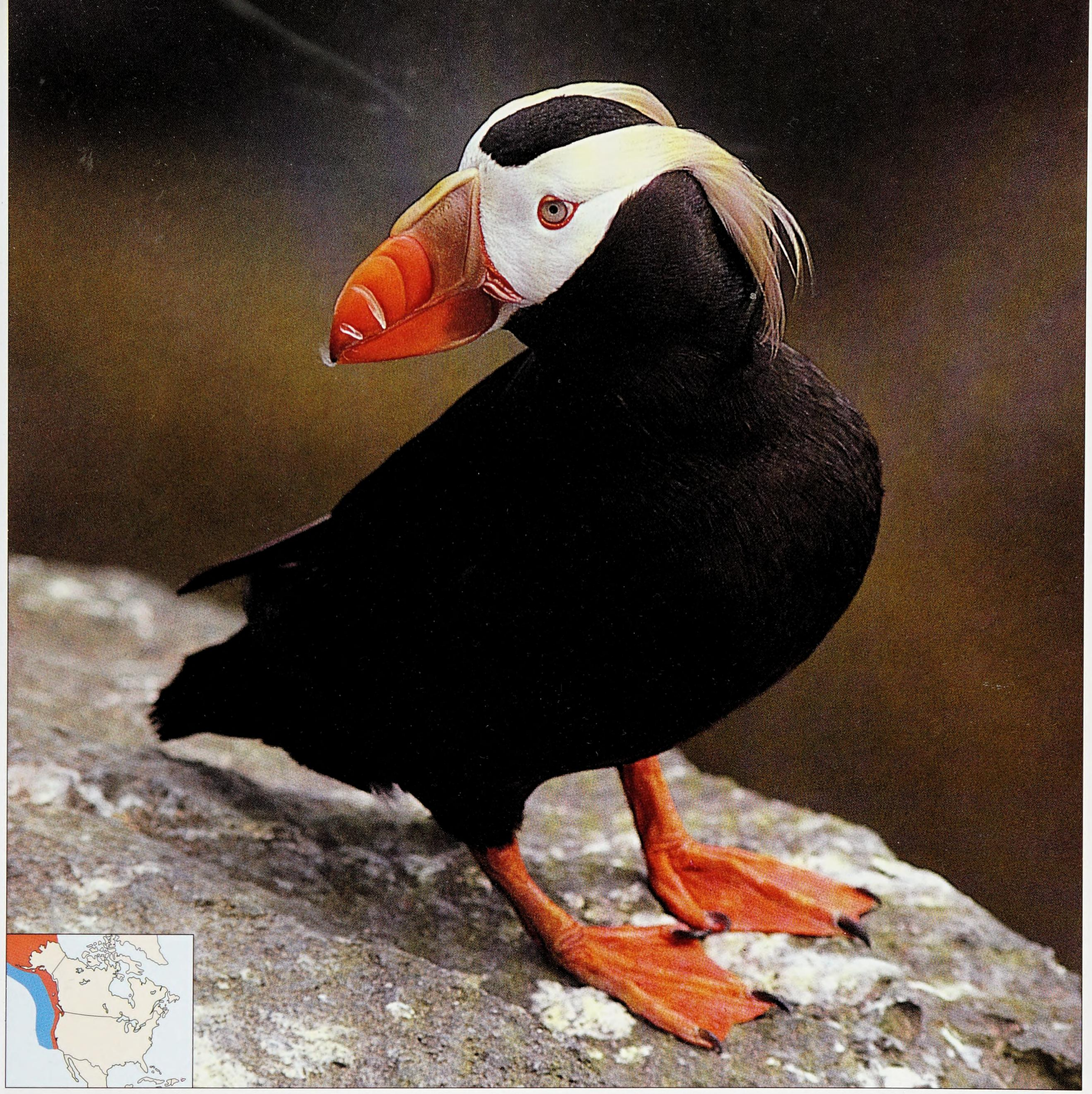


Horned Puffin

Scientific name: *Fratercula corniculata*
Length: 15 inches
Habitat: Offshore
Identification: Medium-size, massive-billed sea bird. Breeding adult black above, white beneath, white face, yellow parrot-like bill, tipped red. Winter adult gray face, bill smaller and duller
Similar species: Although the Horned Puffin closely resembles the Atlantic Puffin, it is only found on the Pacific coast so the two cannot be confused

The Horned Puffin is found in summer all around the Alaskan coast and rarely ventures much further south - except in winter, when it is well offshore. In summer it nests in large colonies on sea cliffs and rocky offshore islands, often with Tufted Puffins. It lays 1 large, whitish egg, sometimes spotted dark brown, usually in a rocky crevice or in a deep hole amongst boulders, but sometimes at the end of a burrow in soft earth. Both birds incubate the egg for 5-6 weeks, and the chicks are ready to leave the nest some 6 weeks later. The adult has a rounded head on a short neck, a stubby body with large, orange webbed feet and a thick, parrot-like bill. The breeding adult is black above and white beneath, with a white face and black collar, and a bright yellow, red-tipped bill. At close quarters, a small black horn can be seen above the eye. In winter, the face turns gray and the bill is smaller and duller, with a dark gray base. The juvenile resembles the winter adult, but has a darker face and its bill is much smaller and sooty-brown. Like the other members of its family, the Horned Puffin dives for fish, but it will also eat mollusks and small crustaceans.

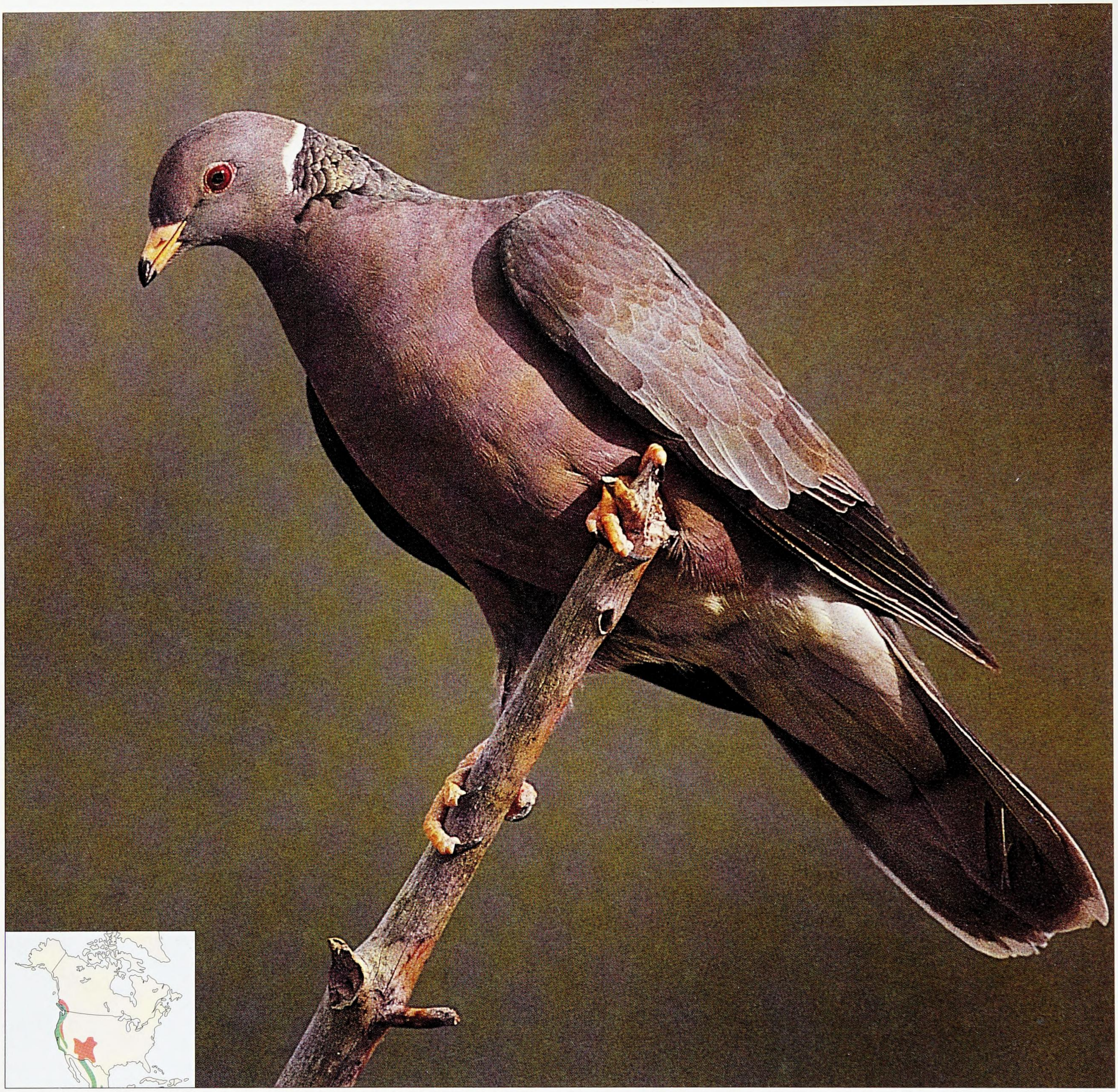




Tufted Puffin

Scientific name:	*Fratercula cirrhata*
Length:	15 inches
Habitat:	Offshore
Identification:	Medium-size, massive-billed sea bird. Breeding adult black, white face, drooping yellow tuft behind eye, orange-red parrot-like bill. Winter adult face black, less discernible tufts, bill smaller and duller
Similar species:	Juvenile and winter adult can look very similar to Rhinoceros Auklet, but have thicker, more orange-red bill and larger and more rounded head

Widespread and common, the Tufted Puffin is found all along the Pacific coast of North America - although greater numbers are seen in the northern part of its range. It spends the winter out at sea, but in summer nests in large, dense colonies on vertical sea cliffs, where it is often seen sitting upright. It lays 1 whitish-blue egg, frequently spotted, at the end of a burrow in soft earth - which may be up to 7 feet long - or in the crevices of rocks. Little is known about the incubation or nestling period. The adult has a big, rounded head on a short neck, a stubby body with large, red webbed feet and a thick, orange-red parrot-like bill. The breeding adult is overall black, with a white face and a long, drooping yellow tuft behind the eye. In winter, the face is black and the tuft is less discernible, the bill is smaller and duller, having shed several of its brightly-coloured cover plates that will re-grow the following spring. The juvenile resembles the winter adult, but is white underneath and its bill is smaller and duller; it takes several years to reach its full adult plumage. The Tufted Puffin dives for fish, which it catches offshore during the day, and also eats mollusks and crustaceans. It is a sociable bird, often found with other sea birds.



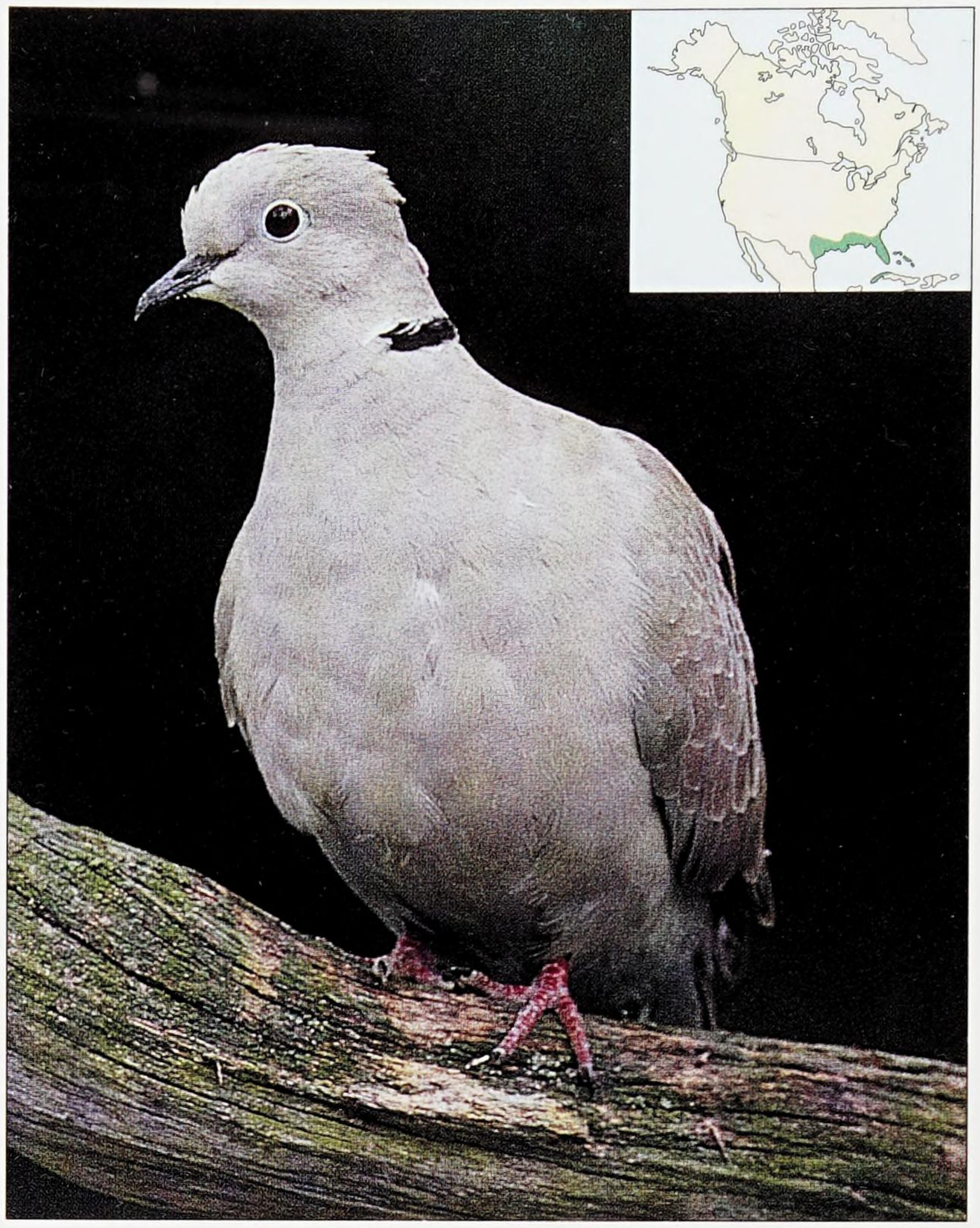
Band-tailed Pigeon

Scientific name:	*Columba fasciata*
Length:	14½ inches
Habitat:	Coniferous forests, oak forests
Identification:	Large, long-tailed pigeon. Dark gray above, pale terminal tail band, purple-pink head and chest, narrow white band on nape above iridescent green patch, yellow bill tipped black, yellow legs
Similar species:	Can look like Rock Dove, but flocks of Band-tailed Pigeon all have the same plumage

The largest of the native American pigeons, the Band-tailed is common all year round on the Pacific coast and in Mexico, but is only a summer visitor inland to the southwest. It sometimes nests in loose colonies, building a thin platform of sticks and twigs in a tree up to 40 feet above the ground, in which it lays 1 white egg. This is incubated for up to 3 weeks by both parent birds and the chick stays in the nest for around 6-7 weeks; there may be further chicks raised in the same season. The plumage of the adult is dark gray above, with a pale terminal tail band, a purple-pink head and chest, and a narrow white band on the nape above an iridescent green patch. The yellow bill is tipped with black, and the legs are yellow. The juvenile lacks the white band at the nape, but is otherwise similar to the adult. The Band-tailed Pigeon eats nuts, berries and insects, and particularly loves acorns. It is adapting to city life, where it feeds in parks and gardens on ornamental berries, including holly.

Eurasian Collared-Dove

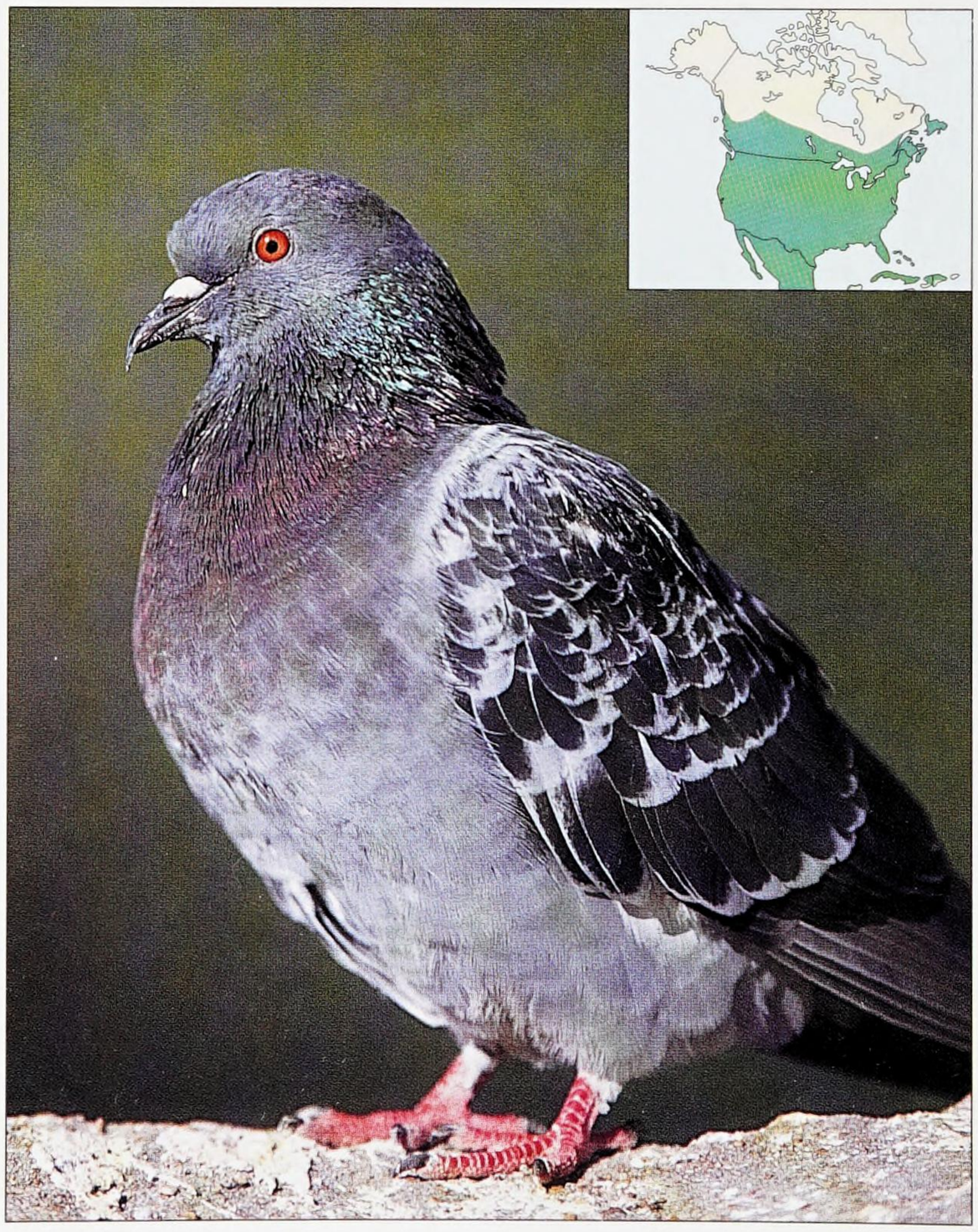
Scientific name: *Streptopelia decaocto*
Length: 12½ inches
Habitat: Urban areas
Identification: Medium-size, square-tailed dove. Pale gray-buff, black half-collar at nape, white patches on outer tail feathers, dark bill, red legs. In flight, shows gray band across upper wings, dark gray tips
Similar species: The Ringed Turtle-Dove is very similar, but is a domesticated species which does not thrive in the wild



A native of the Old World, the Eurasian Collared-Dove was introduced to the Bahamas and rapidly spread to Florida from where it began to move west and north across America. It is now found as far as New Mexico and New York and threatens to spread across the entire continent. It mainly lives in urban areas in the suburbs and is very rarely found in wild country. The plumage of the adult is pale gray-buff overall, with a black half-collar at the nape, and white patches on the outer tail feathers. It has a dark bill and red legs. In flight, it shows a gray band across the upper wings, which have dark gray tips. The Eurasian Collared-Dove has adapted well to city life and is often seen perched on roof tops or poles. It eats seeds, grain and berries.

Rock Dove

Scientific name: *Columba livia*
Length: 12½ inches
Habitat: Urban areas
Identification: Long-winged domestic pigeon, small round head, short straight bill, variable colors
Similar species: The feral Rock Doves come in such a wide variety of colors that it can look similar to several of the wild native species

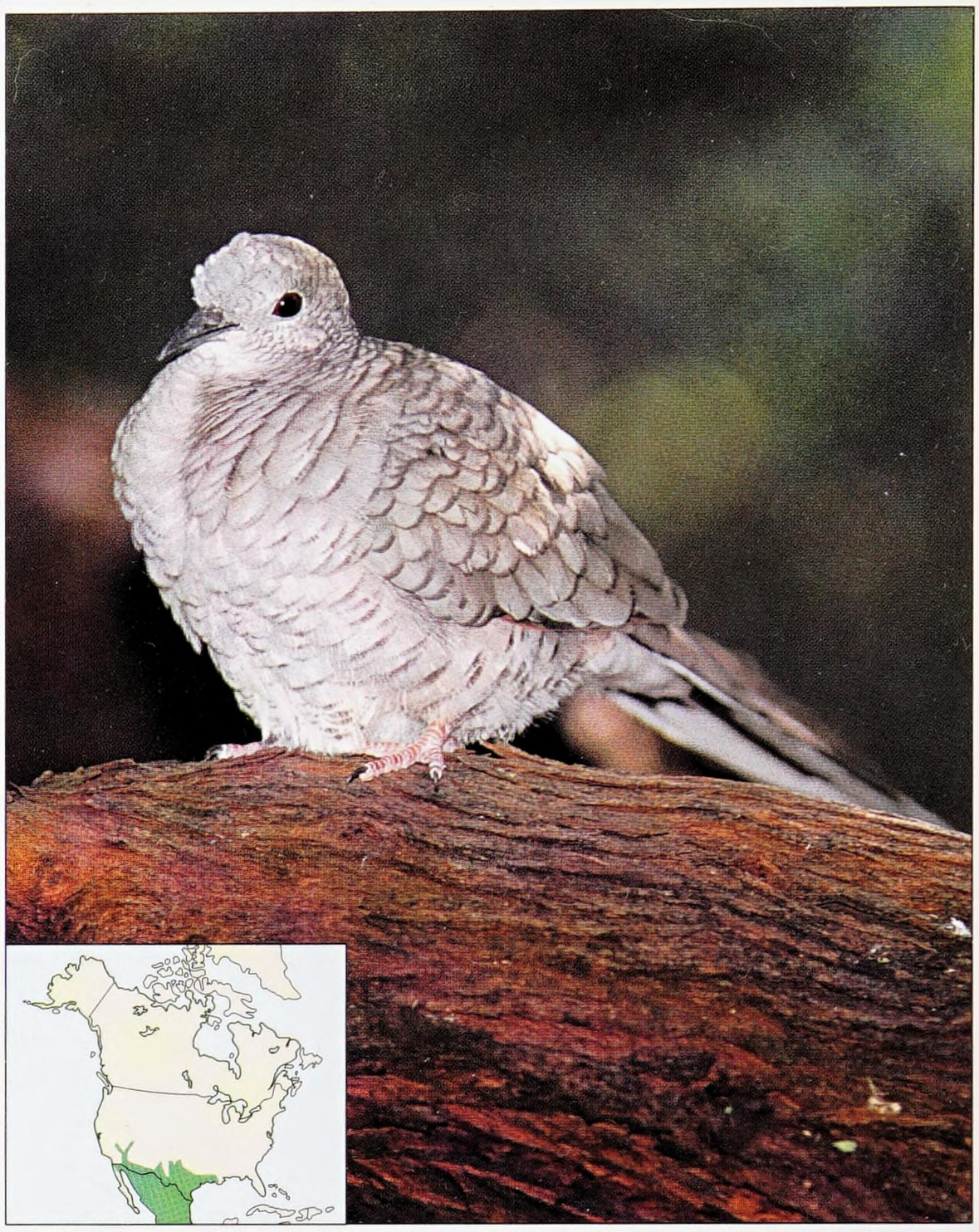


The original habitat of the Rock Dove was on rocky cliffs around the Atlantic and Mediterranean coasts, but they were domesticated worldwide and raised for meat or to carry messages. During centuries of breeding, multicolored birds were developed and descendants of escaped birds now form feral flocks in most areas, except for the taiga and tundra region. The Rock Dove builds a haphazard nest of sticks and grass on the sheltered ledge of a building, bridge, cliff or sometimes in a tree, in which it lays 1-2 white eggs. These are incubated for between 2 and 3 weeks by both birds, and the chicks stay on in the nest for around 7 weeks. The adult nests throughout the year and there may be several broods in a season. The plumage of the adult runs from pure white to black, with cinnamon, piebald and gray birds. The most common is like the wild ancestor - overall blue-gray, with a darker head and iridescent purple-green on the neck, a white rump, a dark terminal band on the tail and two dark bars across the wing. The Rock Dove eats grain and seeds, but will also feed on fruit and scraps of bread.

Inca Dove

Scientific name: *Columbina inca*
Length: $8\frac{1}{4}$ inches
Habitat: Parks, gardens, urban areas
Identification: Small, long-tailed dove. Pale gray-brown with darker scaling. In flight shows rust-red wing feathers and white outer tail feathers
Similar species: Common Ground-Dove has shorter tail and is only scaled on chest and head. Juvenile Mourning Dove also looks scaled, but lacks rufous wings

The sociable Inca Dove is only found in the southwest, where it tends to live in small flocks in urban and semi-urban areas as it prefers to be near humans. It builds a small nest of roots, twigs and weeds in a bush or tree, or sometimes on the ledge of a building, in which it lays 2 white, roundish eggs. These are incubated for around 2 weeks by both parent birds; after hatching the chick stays in the nest for around 12 more days. There may be as many as 5 broods raised in a single season. The adult is a small and slender bird, and has a long, narrow tail with a square tip. Its plumage is pale gray-brown with darker scaling, but in flight it shows rust-red wing feathers and white outer tail feathers. The juvenile is a very similar color to the adult, but has no scaling. The Inca Dove eats seeds and grain.



Common Ground-Dove

Scientific name: *Columbina passerina*
Length: $6\frac{1}{2}$ inches
Habitat: Open ground, dry brushy areas, woodland edges
Identification: Small, stocky, short-tailed dove. Pale gray-brown with scaling on head and chest, large brown-black spots on wing coverts. In flight shows rust-red wing feathers, black outer tail feathers with white at corners
Similar species: Inca Dove has longer tail and is scaled on back. Juvenile Mourning Dove also looks scaled, but lacks rufous wings

The tiny Common Ground-Dove is found across much of the south, where it usually walks on the ground in pairs or in small flocks, nodding like a pigeon. It prefers brushy terrain and woodland edges and rarely ventures into urban areas. It builds a rather flimsy nest of roots, twigs and weeds low in a bush or tree, or sometimes just lines a depression in the ground, in which it lays 2 white, roundish eggs. These are incubated for around 2 weeks by both birds, and the chicks stay in the nest for around 10 more days. The adult is a small, stocky bird, and has a short tail and neck. Its plumage is pale gray-brown with scaling on the head and chest, and the wing coverts have large brown-black spots. The adult male has a blue-gray crown and pinkish-gray underparts, but the female is more uniformly gray. In flight, both birds show rust-red wing feathers and black outer tail feathers with white at the corners. Although it has quite short wings, the Common Ground-Dove flies very fast. It pecks seeds and grain from the ground, but will also take berries and insects.



Mourning Dove

Scientific name: *Zenaida macroura*
Length: 12 inches
Habitat: Open brushland, urban areas
Identification: Medium-size, slender dove with long pointed tapered tail. Pale gray-brown above with large black spots on wings, buff below. Adult male pinkish on chest and iridescent blue-gray on crown
Similar species: Juvenile Mourning Dove can be mistaked for Inca Dove or Common Ground-Dove, but lacks rufous wings

Very common across much of America, the Mourning Dove also spreads north into Canada in the summer. It likes a variety of habitats, except for deep woods, and is seen both alone and in flocks, either perched prominently on poles or wires or walking on the ground. At the start of its long breeding season, it builds a rather loose nest of twigs and sticks in a bush or a tree, in which it lays 2 white eggs. These are incubated for around 2 weeks by both birds alternately, and the chicks stay in the nest for around 16 more days; there may be 2-4 broods in one season. The adult is a rather slender dove, with narrow pointed wings and a long, pointed, tapering tail with the side feathers edged with black and tipped with white. It has a light blue ring round the eye, and a large dark spot at the base of the ear. Its plumage is pale gray-brown above, with large black spots on the wings, and buff below. The adult male is pinkish on the chest and iridescent blue-gray on the crown, but the female is plainer and also has a shorter tail. The juvenile is similar to the adult, but is more scaled. The Mourning Dove makes a whistling noise with its wings as it takes flight, but the bird's name comes from the male's mournful cry, which sounds a little like an owl. It mainly eats seeds and grain.





White-winged Dove

Scientific name:	*Zenaida asiatica*
Length:	11½ inches
Habitat:	Desert suburbs, mesquite, open brushy areas
Identification:	Medium-size, broad-winged dove with short rounded tail. Gray-brown above with iridescent purple on crown, neck and shoulder, white wing patch shows as line along flank of perching bird
Similar species:	Mourning Dove lacks white wing patches and has longer, pointed tail

The White-winged Dove is found in the far south in the summer, but most birds go south to the tropics for the winter. It is a similar length to the Mourning Dove, but has a bulkier body and a shorter tail. It often nests in colonies, building a flimsy construction of sticks in a bush, cactus or tree, in which it lays 2 buffy-white eggs. These are incubated for around 2 weeks by both adult birds, and the chicks stay in the nest for around 2 more weeks; there is often more than one brood in a season. The adult has broad wings with a long white wing patch and black ends, and a short, rounded tail with a subterminal band of black and terminal band of white. It is gray-brown above with iridescent purple on the crown, neck and shoulder, and the white wing patch shows as a narrow line along the flank of the perching bird. The White-winged Dove flies fast with heavy wingbeats, and is a game bird. It eats seeds and grain like northern pigeons and doves, but will also feed on fruit like the tropical species - in the desert it eats cactus, but otherwise will take berries.

Greater Roadrunner

Scientific name: *Geococcyx californianus*
Length: 23 inches
Habitat: Scrub desert, mesquite groves
Identification: Large, long-tailed desert bird with crest and heavy bill. Brown with green sheen, streaked black and white above, buff below with brown streaks on breast
Similar species: Unmistakable

Famous for its odd behavior, the Greater Roadrunner is a member of the cuckoo family that prefers to run smoothly along the ground on its strong feet - although it can fly if it has to. Its range extends across much of southern America, but it is most common in the desert of the southwest, where it darts away to cover at speeds of up to 15 miles per hour if surprised in the open. It builds a small, neat nest in mesquite, a large cactus or shrub in chaparral, in which it lays 3-6 white eggs. These are incubated for up to 3 weeks, with the young chicks hatching at intervals and staying in the nest for a further 2-3 weeks, fed by both parent birds. The adult is a large bird with a long tail edged in white, a bushy crest and heavy dark bill. Its plumage is brown with green sheen above, streaked with black and white, and buff below, with brown streaks on the breast. It sometimes flicks its tail up or raises its shaggy crest, and can adopt a variety of strange postures when resting on a fence post or rock. It runs in fast bursts to catch a wide variety of food, including large insects, scorpions, lizards, snakes, small birds and rodents.



Groove-billed Ani

Scientific name: *Crotophaga sulcirostris*
Length: 13½ inches
Habitat: Woodlands, brushy fields
Identification: Medium-size, long-tailed cuckoo. Black plumage with iridescent purple and green sheen, large, thick grooved bill
Similar species: Smooth-billed Ani is similar, but is only found in declining numbers in Florida

The Groove-billed Ani is a tropical cuckoo that is found in summer in southern Texas and sometimes wanders along the Gulf coast as far as Florida in winter. It is fairly common and is often seen in small groups, either clumsily hopping on the ground or perching in the open. A sociable bird, several pairs often share the same nest, a mass of twigs up to 12 feet above the ground in a tree or shrub. Each female lays 3-4 pale blue eggs, which are incubated for around 2 weeks - some may not hatch, so the pair will raise more than one brood in a season. The adult is medium-size, with a long tail and a large, thick grooved bill - although the grooves are not evident at a distance. Its plumage is black, with an iridescent purple and green sheen. The juvenile has a smaller bill and its plumage is more brownish. The Groove-billed Ani tends to fly with a few quick flaps and then goes into a glide; when perching it may dip and wag its tail, or hold it at a strange angle. It eats insects, fruit and lizards.



Oriental Cuckoo

Scientific name: *Cuculus saturatus*
Length: 12½ inches
Habitat: Woodland, along streams
Identification: Medium-size, slender cuckoo with plain underwing coverts, yellow eye ring, two-tone bill. Male gray above, paler beneath and heavily barred, female more brown-gray
Similar species: Old World Common Cuckoo, also spring and summer visitor to North America, is very similar but is paler gray, with whiter belly and narrower barring, underwing barred not plain



A Eurasian species, the Oriental Cuckoo is a visitor to western North America in both spring and summer, but tends to stay up in Alaska for much of the time. So far, it has not been known to nest in America. The adult is a medium-size, slender bird with a relatively long tail. It has plain underwing coverts, a yellow eye ring, and a bill that is black above and yellowish below. The male is a fairly plain dark gray above, paler gray beneath heavily barred in darker gray. The female (*right*) is generally more brown-gray - although a few are gray - but has barring on both head and back, and on wings and tail, as well as on the belly. The Common Cuckoo, an Old World species, is also a visitor to the same area of North America and looks extremely similar, although its plumage tends to be paler. Like other cuckoos, the Oriental Cuckoo eats caterpillars, insects and berries.

Black-billed Cuckoo

Scientific name: *Coccyzus erythropthalmus*
Length: 12 inches
Habitat: Woodland, along streams
Identification: Medium-size, slender, long-tailed cuckoo. Gray-brown above, whitish-gray beneath, black bill, red eye ring, undertail gray-brown with narrow white spots
Similar species: Juvenile Yellow-billed Cuckoo similar but rufous patches on wings in flight are distinctive, white patches on undertail are larger



Fairly common in woodland in summer, the Black-billed Cuckoo is a shy and elusive bird that may be very difficult to spot. Although it sometimes does deposit an egg in the nest of another bird, the female bird usually lays 2-5 greeny-blue eggs in its own, rather flimsy, nest of twigs and grass up to 10 feet above the ground in a tree or dense bush. These are incubated for about 2 weeks by both birds, with the chicks hatched naked and not getting their first feathers until they are around 6 days old; they leave the nest around 2 weeks after hatching. The adult is a slender, medium-size bird with a slim, black bill and a red ring around the eye. Its plumage is gray-brown above and whitish-gray beneath, and it has a gray-brown undertail with narrow white spots. The juvenile has a buff eye ring and the undertail is paler with less contrast. In flight, the Black-billed Cuckoo shows whitish underwings edged with gray-brown, and is relatively plain gray-brown above. It eats caterpillars, insects and berries.



Yellow-billed Cuckoo

Scientific name:	*Coccyzus americanus*
Length:	12 inches
Habitat:	Open woods, trees along lowland rivers
Identification:	Medium-size, slender, long-tailed cuckoo. Gray-brown above, white beneath, mostly yellow curved bill, yellow eye ring, undertail black with large white spots, rufous wing patches in flight
Similar species:	Yellow bill and rufous patches on wings in flight are distinctive in adult, but juvenile similar to Black-billed Cuckoo

Although it occupies a somewhat different general area, the ranges of the Black-billed and Yellow-billed cuckoos do overlap. The Yellow-billed is also fairly common in woodland in summer, but hides in dense foliage so can be easily overlooked. It usually builds a frail platform of twigs up to 10 feet above the ground in a small tree or dense bush, in which it lays 2-4 greeny-blue eggs. These are incubated for about 2 weeks by both birds, with the chicks hatched naked and not getting their first feathers until they are around 6 days old; they leave the nest around 2 weeks after hatching. The adult is a slender, medium-size bird with a slim, down-curved bill with a yellow lower mandible, and a yellow ring around the eye. Its plumage is gray-brown above and white beneath, and it has a black undertail with large white spots. The juvenile lacks any yellow on the bill and the undertail is browner with less contrast. In flight, the Yellow-billed Cuckoo shows white underwings edged with bright rufous, and is gray-brown above with rufous patches. It eats insects and berries, and particularly likes hairy caterpillars, which few other birds will touch. Its population is decreasing with the loss of its natural breeding habitat.

Northern Pygmy-Owl

Scientific name: *Glaucidium gnoma*
Length: $6\frac{3}{4}$ inches
Habitat: Dense woodland in foothills and mountains
Identification: Small, compact owl with long, finely barred tail. Brown or gray-brown with fine buff spotting above, buff with bold brown or gray-brown streaks below, two black spots edged with white on back of neck that look like eyes
Similar species: Size and coloring distinctive

The Northern Pygmy-Owl is one of the few owls that is often active in daylight hours, but although it is widespread in mountain forests, it is relatively uncommon. Since it is small and prefers to perch high in the trees it is often very difficult to find, although it can sometimes be spotted when other forest birds gather to scold and mob it. It does not build a nest, but lays 2-6 white eggs in an old woodpecker hole. These are usually incubated by the female alone for up to 4 weeks, and the chicks are fed by both adults and are ready to leave about 4 weeks after hatching. The adult is a small, compact bird with yellow eyes and a long, dark tail finely barred with white or buff. Its plumage is either brown or gray-brown, with fine buff spotting above, and buff with bold brown or gray-brown streaks below - grayer birds are found in the Rockies, while browner ones are nearer the Pacific and in the north. All birds also have two black spots edged with white on the back of the neck, which look uncannily like eyes. The Northern Pygmy-Owl is an aggressive predator, which does not hesitate to attack birds even larger than itself. It also eats small mammals and large insects.



Elf Owl

Scientific name: *Micrathene whitneyi*
Length: $5\frac{3}{4}$ inches
Habitat: Desert lowlands, foothills, canyons
Identification: Tiny, short-tailed owl with small head. Gray-brown with fine gray spotting above, faint buff streaks below, yellow eyes, white eyebrows
Similar species: Size and coloring distinctive

The smallest of the North American owls, the Elf Owl is found in summer in lowland areas, particularly in saguaro desert and mesquite brush, and most birds migrate south in winter. It is only found in a few areas and is quite rare within those, and since it is small and only hunts at night it is often extremely difficult to spot. It does not build a nest, but lays 3 or 4 white eggs in an old, abandoned woodpecker hole in a saguaro cactus or a tree. The eggs are usually incubated by the female alone for about 3 weeks, while the male hunts for food; the chicks are ready to leave about 4-5 weeks after hatching. The adult is a tiny, short-tailed bird with a small head, yellow eyes and white eyebrows. Its plumage is gray-brown with fine gray spotting above, a row of white spots on the shoulder and faint buff streaks below. The Elf Owl population has declined over recent years and it has now almost vanished from California. It eats only large insects, including grasshoppers, beetles and scorpions.





Boreal Owl

Scientific name: *Aegolius funereus*
Length: 10 inches
Habitat: Dense forest
Identification: Small, chubby, long-winged owl with largish head. Chocolate brown, thickly spotted with white on head, sparsely spotted elsewhere, streaked brown and white below, yellow eyes and bill, large grayish facial discs with dark border
Similar species: Northern Saw-whet Owl smaller, has dark bill, facial discs buffy and lack dark border

An elusive bird of the north, the Boreal Owl rarely wanders south of its mapped range. It inhabits dense forests and breeds in isolated places high in the Rockies. It does not build a nest, but takes over an old, abandoned woodpecker hole or a tree cavity in which it lays 3-7 white eggs. These are incubated for around 4 weeks by the female and the chicks leave about 4-5 weeks after hatching. The adult is small and chubby, with quite long wings and a largish head with yellow eyes and bill. Its plumage is chocolate brown, thickly spotted with white on the head, sparsely spotted with white elsewhere, streaked brown and white below, and with large grayish facial discs that have a dark border. The Boreal Owl mainly eats large insects and small rodents. It has little contact with humans so it appears very tame, sitting still when approached.

Burrowing Owl *(below)*

Scientific name:	*Speotyto cunicularia*
Length:	9½ inches
Habitat:	Open country
Identification:	Small, long-legged, short-tailed owl with flat head. Brown spotted with white above and on upper breast, barred brown and white below, white throat, yellow eyes
Similar species:	Long legs distinctive

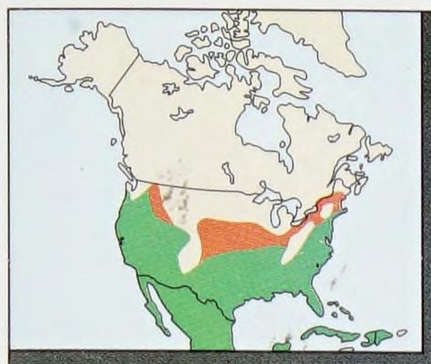
The Burrowing Owl was once well-known and common, but its numbers have declined over recent years. It inhabits open country, including airports and golf courses in urban areas. It does not build a nest, but takes over the abandoned burrow of a ground squirrel or prairie dog - or a gopher tortoise in Florida - in which it lays 5-7 white eggs. These are incubated for around 4 weeks and the chicks appear from the burrow soon after hatching, although little is known about their exact nestling period. The adult is small, with very long legs, a short stubby tail, flat head and yellow eyes. Its plumage is brown spotted with white above and on the upper breast, barred brown and white below, with a white throat and eyebrows. The Burrowing Owl stands upright on the ground or on fence posts and feeds mainly on large insects and small rodents, but will also take small birds. Although it normally hunts in the day, the male hunts both day and night when it is also providing food for the young.

Barn Owl *(opposite)*

Scientific name:	*Tyto alba*
Length:	16 inches
Habitat:	Barns, old buildings, cliffs, trees
Identification:	Medium-size, long-legged owl with heart-shaped face and dark eyes. White face edged with tan, light tan back with fine pale gray streaks, white to cinnamon beneath
Similar species:	Snowy Owl usually whiter, has small head and yellow eyes

Although it is widespread across much of North America, the Barn Owl is quite rare and its population is declining. It hunts over farmland, woodland and suburbs at night and roosts in dark corners of farm and city buildings, or sometimes on cliffs or trees. It does not build a nest, but lays 5-11 white eggs on the bare surface in a cavity such as a cave, or corner of a barn or attic. The eggs are usually incubated by the female alone for up to 5 weeks, and the chicks are ready to leave about 8 weeks after hatching but are not ready to become independent for another month. The adult is a medium-size bird with long, feathered legs, a white heart-shaped face edged with tan and dark eyes. Its plumage is light tan above with fine, pale gray streaks, and white to cinnamon beneath. Darker birds are females, while males are lighter. At night, caught in lights, or seen from below the Barn Owl may look all-white like a Snowy Owl. It hunts during the night, catching mice and rats.







Whiskered Screech-Owl

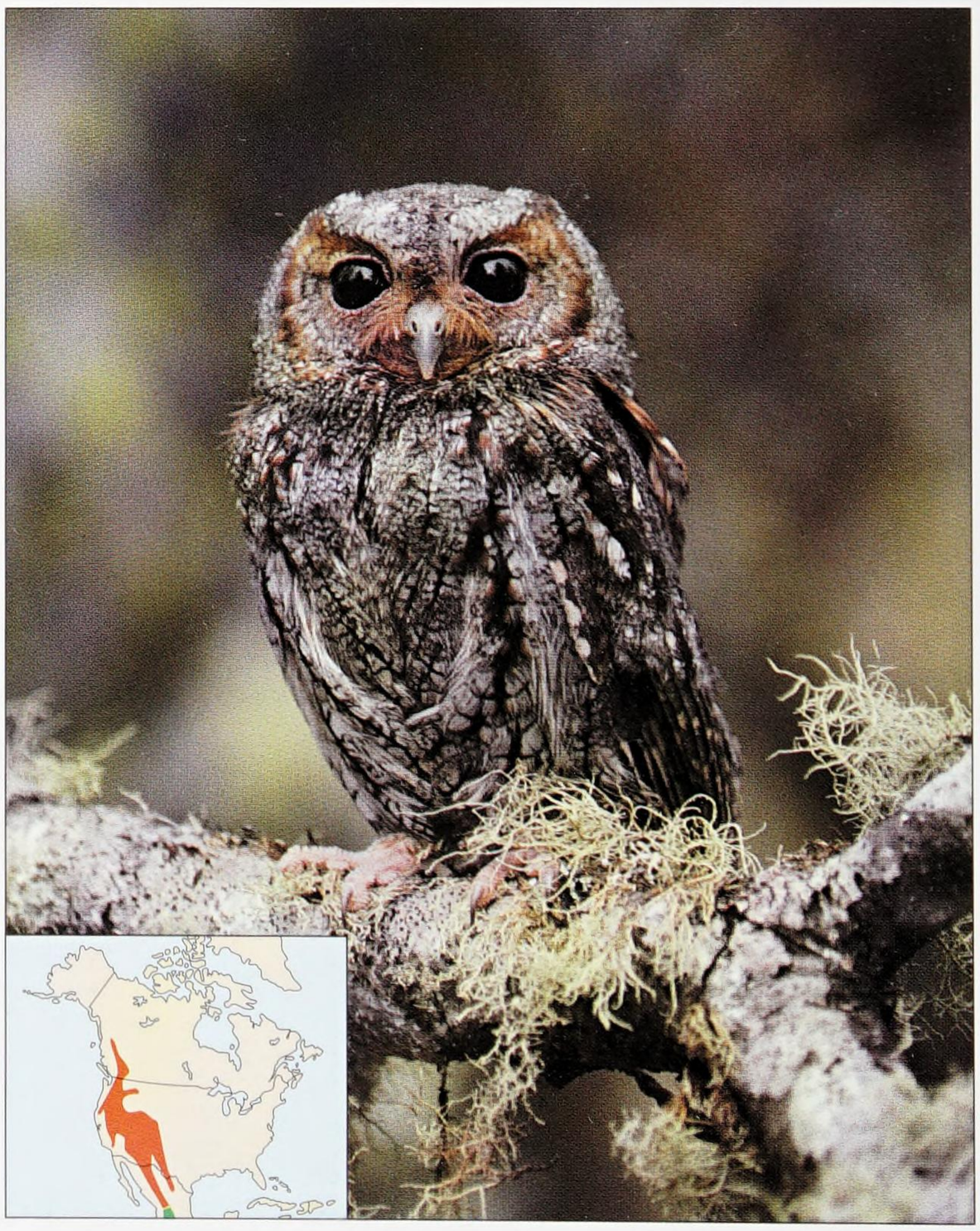
Scientific name:	*Otus trichopsis*
Length:	$7\frac{1}{4}$ inches
Habitat:	Mountain oak and conifer forests at altitudes between 4000-6000 feet
Identification:	Small, yellow-eyed owl with short ear tufts and yellow-green bill tipped white. Gray plumage, short thick vertical streaks on underparts crossed with bold dark barring
Similar species:	All three Screech-Owls are very similar. The Eastern ranges from gray to rust and has a yellow-green bill tipped white, the Western has a darker bill and prominent bars on its underparts crossed with weak dark barring

A common owl at higher altitudes, the Whiskered Screech-Owl prefers dense pine-oak woods and is quite shy, but will answer whistled imitations of its call. It nests in deep tree cavities, often in an old flicker hole, in which it lays 3-4 round white eggs. The chicks hatch in sequence and vary in age and size within a brood, so if food runs short, the older ones survive at the expense of the smallest. The adult is small with yellow-orange eyes and has short ear tufts, which may be held flat against the head so it appears rounded, and a yellow-green bill tipped with white. It has long bristles at the base of its bill like whiskers, from which it gets its name, and smallish feet. Its plumage is gray with short, thick, vertical streaks on the underparts, crossed with bold dark bars. The Whiskered Screech-Owl hunts at night, mainly for large insects and spiders.

Flammulated Owl

Scientific name:	*Otus flammeolus*
Length:	$6\frac{3}{4}$ inches
Habitat:	Oak and pine woodland
Identification:	Small, dark-eyed owl. Gray-brown above, lighter beneath, streaked and spotted with white and rust, short ear tufts. Females larger than males
Similar species:	Similar to a Screech-Owl, but smaller

A small owl that spends the summer in coniferous and pine-oak woods in the west, the Flammulated Owl migrates south in winter. It is fairly common, but is elusive and its plumage provides good camouflage, making it hard to spot. It sometimes nests in loose colonies, usually taking over an old woodpecker hole or finding a similar tree cavity, in which it lays 3 or 4 white eggs that are mainly incubated by the female while the male hunts for food and protects the nest. The adult is small and has distinctive dark eyes and short ear tufts. Its plumage is gray-brown above and lighter beneath, streaked and spotted with white and rust. Birds in the southeast tend to have more rusty plumage than those in the northwest. Both sexes are similar, but the female is larger than the male. The Flammulated Owl hunts at night for mice, large moths, beetles, spiders and small birds.

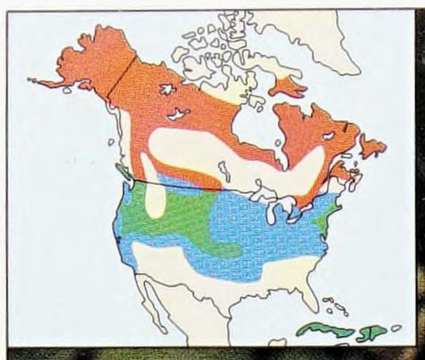




Long-eared Owl

Scientific name:	*Asio otus*
Length:	15 inches
Habitat:	Thick woods
Identification:	Medium-size, slender owl with long closely-spaced ear tufts. Gray-brown above, whitish with dark vertical streaks beneath, buff or rusty facial discs
Similar species:	Great Horned Owl is larger and bulkier and has white throat and horizontal barring

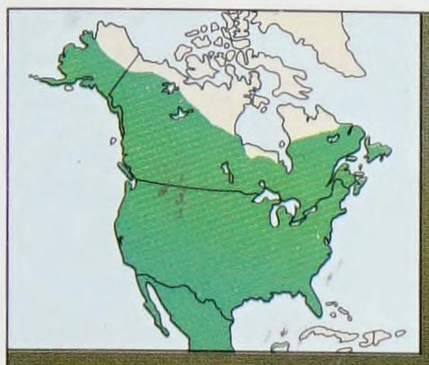
The Long-eared Owl is relatively uncommon, although it may be seen in small flocks during the winter. It is found in forest areas but is strictly nocturnal and often rather quiet, and its excellent camouflage makes it extremely hard to spot. It does not build its own nest, but lays 3-8 white eggs in the nest of a magpie, crow or squirrel, taking over before the original inhabitants are ready to breed and forcing them to build again elsewhere. The eggs are usually incubated by the female alone for about 4 weeks, and the chicks are ready to leave the nest about 5 weeks after hatching. The adult is a medium-size, slender bird with orange-yellow eyes, buff or rusty facial discs with a dark stripe through the eye, and long, closely-spaced ear tufts. Its plumage is gray-brown above, and whitish beneath with dark vertical streaks. The Long-eared Owl is sometimes mobbed by smaller birds, but it very seldom attacks them; it feeds mainly on rodents.



Short-eared Owl

Scientific name:	*Asio flammeus*
Length:	15 inches
Habitat:	Open ground, marshes, fields, tundra
Identification:	Medium-size owl with short ear tufts. Mottled brownish above, buffy with brown vertical streaks beneath, pale facial discs with black round eyes
Similar species:	Long-eared Owl is darker, with much longer ears

It is much easier to spot the Short-eared Owl, as it sometimes hunts in daylight and roosts in the day on the ground or on low, open perches. It is fairly common, and may be seen in small flocks in winter. It is found in open country with short vegetation, such as tundra, marshes and forest clearings. It does not build a nest, but lays 5-9 creamy-white eggs in a shallow, grass-lined depression in the ground - often well hidden in vegetation. The eggs are usually incubated by the female for around 21 days, and the chicks are ready to leave the nest about 6 weeks after hatching. The adult is a medium-size bird with yellow eyes, pale facial discs with black round the eyes, and short ear tufts that may not be visible. Its plumage is mottled brownish above, and buffy with brown vertical streaks beneath. In flight it shows pale wing linings and a dark mark at the wrist, with a buffy patch above. The Short-eared Owl hunts for small rodents at night or on cloudy days, flying low over the ground or watching from a stump - sometimes several birds hunt over the same area.



Great Horned Owl

Scientific name:	*Bubo virginianus*
Length:	22 inches
Habitat:	Forest, open desert, urban areas
Identification:	Large, bulky owl with wide-spaced ear tufts. Mottled gray-brown above, white throat, fine dark gray horizontal barring beneath
Similar species:	Long-eared Owl is smaller and more slender, lacks white throat and has vertical streaking beneath

The most widespread and best known owl in North America, the Great Horned Owl is found in a great variety of habitats and may often be seen perching high up at dusk. It does not build its own nest, but lays 2-4 white eggs in the abandoned nest of a hawk, heron or crow, in a rocky crevice, tree or cliff. The eggs are incubated by the female for about 7 weeks, but the downy whitish chicks are fed by both parents and are ready to leave the nest around 10 weeks after hatching. The adult is a large, bulky bird with yellow eyes and wide-spaced ear tufts that give its head a cat-like look. Its plumage is mottled gray-brown above, with a white throat, and fine dark gray horizontal barring beneath. The Great Horned Owl is a skilled predator with powerful talons, a sharp hooked bill and a big appetite; it is not afraid to tackle quite large prey such as rabbits, squirrels, geese, skunks and snakes. It hunts mainly at night, but is sometimes seen in the day - when it is often mobbed by smaller birds.


Great Horned Owl

Eastern Screech-Owl

(opposite page and right)

Scientific name: *Otus asio*
Length: 8½ inches
Habitat: Large trees, suburban parks
Identification: Small, yellow-eyed owl with ear tufts and yellow-green bill tipped white. Colour ranges from gray through brown to rust, vertically streaked underparts crossed with dark barring
Similar species: All three Screech-Owls are very similar. The Western is generally gray and has a dark bill, the Whiskered is slightly smaller than the other two and has bolder barring on its underparts

The Eastern Screech-Owl is very common in most areas across its extensive range, but because of its nocturnal habits, small size and good camouflage it is often not noticed. It likes large mature trees, and lives undetected in many parks and suburban gardens. It nests in tree cavities, often in an old woodpecker hole, or will inhabit a nesting box. It lays 4-6 white eggs that are mainly incubated by the female for up to 4 weeks, while the male hunts for food and protects the nest. The chicks are downy and stay in the nest for around 4 weeks after hatching. The adult is small with yellow eyes and has ear tufts, which are prominent when raised, but may be held flat against the head, which then appears rounded. Its bill is yellow-green at the base, tipped with white, but the plumage is very variable, even within the same population. Some birds are gray (*opposite*), others are brown and some are bright rust (*right*), but in general they have vertically streaked underparts crossed with wide, well-spaced dark bars. Birds in the southeast tend to be rusty, while those on the Great Plains are usually gray. The Eastern Screech-Owl hunts at night for mice and insects and sometimes dives for fish.



Western Screech-Owl

Scientific name: *Otus kennicottii*
Length: 8½ inches
Habitat: Open woods, deserts, suburban parks
Identification: Small, yellow-eyed owl with ear tufts and dark bill. Gray or brown plumage, prominent vertical streaks on underparts crossed with weak dark barring
Similar species: All three Screech-Owls are very similar. The Eastern ranges from gray to rust and has a yellow-green bill tipped white, the Whiskered is slightly smaller than the other two and has bolder barring on its underparts

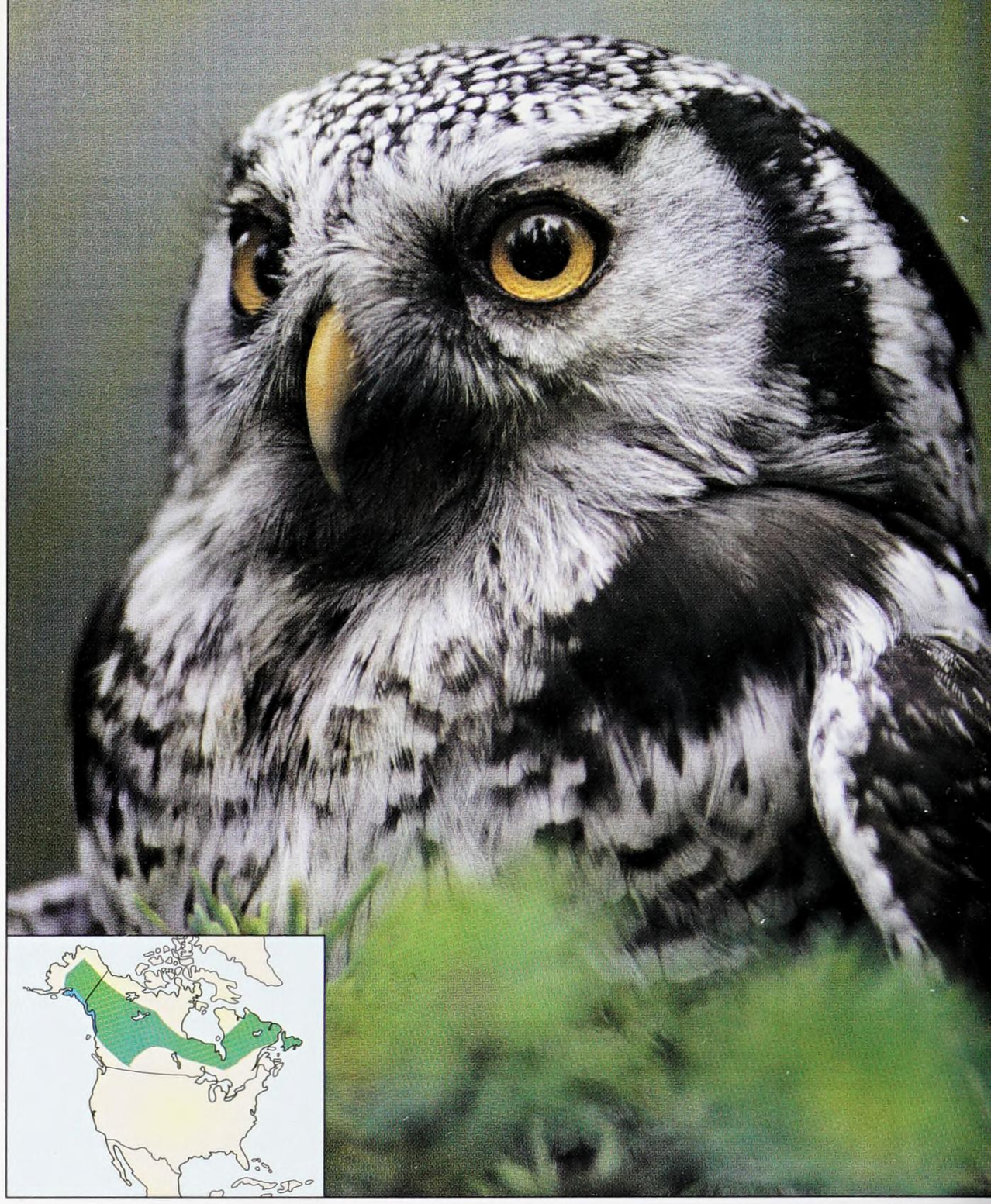
The Western and Eastern Screech-Owl were once considered to be one species, and their ranges overlap; they occupy similar habitats, but the Western is also found in desert areas. It is fairly common across much of its range, but again is well-camouflaged and nocturnal and often lives undetected. It nests in tree cavities, often in an old woodpecker hole, in which it lays 4-6 white eggs. These are incubated for up to 4 weeks, mainly by the female, while the male hunts for food. The chicks are downy and stay in the nest for about 27 days after hatching. The adult is small with yellow eyes and has prominent ear tufts, which may be held flat against the head so it appears rounded, and a black bill. Its plumage is gray - or sometimes brown in the northwest - with prominent vertical streaks on the underparts crossed with weak dark barring. The Western Screech-Owl hunts at night for mice, shrews and large insects and sometimes dives for fish.



Northern Hawk Owl

Scientific name:	*Surnia ulula*
Length:	16 inches
Habitat:	Northern forests
Identification:	Medium-size, hawk-like owl with long pointed tail. Dark brown with white blotches and dots above, brown with white horizontal barring below, pale facial discs edged in black
Similar species:	Long tail, facial discs and hawk-like profile are distinctive

Although it is relatively uncommon, the Northern Hawk Owl might be seen flying fast and low between the trees of boreal forests. Since daylight hours are much longer above the Arctic circle in summer, it hunts in daylight and at night but very rarely ventures further south of its mapped range. Since it usually has little contact with humans it may appear very tame, sitting still when approached. It does not build a nest, but lays 3-7 white eggs in the nest of another bird or in a tree cavity or stump. These are mainly incubated by the female for around 3-4 weeks, and the chicks are ready to leave the nest about 4-5 weeks after hatching. The adult is a medium-size, hawk-like bird with yellow eyes and a long pointed tail. Its plumage is dark brown above with white blotches and dots, brown with white horizontal barring below, and it has pale facial discs edged in black and narrow pale bars on the tail. The juvenile lacks most of the cross-barring and is much plainer. The Northern Hawk Owl feeds mainly on rodents, including lemmings, but in winter will also take small birds.



Barred Owl

Scientific name:	*Strix varia*
Length:	21 inches
Habitat:	Dense conifer or mixed woodland, swamps
Identification:	Large, stocky, broad-winged owl with short tail. Brown with dark barring on upper chest, dark streaking below, dark eyes, yellow bill
Similar species:	The rare Spotted Owl looks similar, but is brown with white spots beneath, has dark bill and is smaller

In southern swamps the Barred Owl is fairly common, but it also inhabits dense forest across a wider range, which is expanding to the northwest. It is more likely than other owls to be heard during the day, hooting, screaming and cackling. Like other owls, it does not build a nest, but lays 3-4 white eggs in the nest of another bird or squirrel or in a tree cavity or stump. These are mainly incubated by the female for around 4 weeks, and the chicks are ready to leave the nest about 6 weeks after hatching. The adult is a large, broad-winged bird with a round head, yellow bill, dark eyes and a short tail. Its plumage is brown-gray, barred with white above and pale with dark barring on the upper chest and dark streaking below. Although it is mainly nocturnal, the Barred Owl may be seen hunting on cloudy days. It feeds mainly on mice, but will also take small mammals, birds, frogs and snakes.

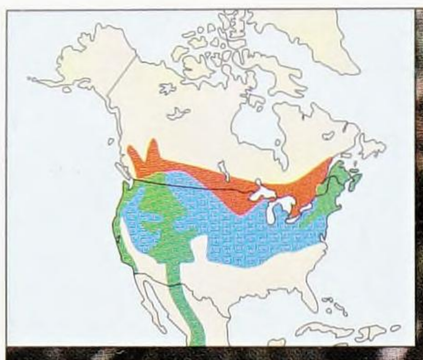




Snowy Owl

Scientific name:	*Nyctea scandiaca*
Length:	23 inches
Habitat:	Tundra, open country
Identification:	Large, stocky owl with small head and yellow eyes. Mature adult male white, younger birds white with variable black barring
Similar species:	The Barn Owl can be very pale, but has heart-shaped face and dark eyes. Downy young of other owl species also often white

The Snowy Owl is an Arctic bird, but since it depends on the lemming, a small rodent, as its major food it migrates south whenever the lemming population decreases and may be seen perching in the open in the daylight. It does not build a nest, but lays 5-9 white eggs - or even more in a very good season - in a shallow, moss and grass-lined depression in dry ground on tundra. The eggs are usually incubated by the female alone for around 4-5 weeks, and the chicks are ready to leave the nest about 6 weeks after they have hatched. The adult is quite a large, stocky bird with a small head and yellow eyes. The plumage of the mature adult male is almost pure white, but younger birds and females are white with variable amounts of black barring and spotting. The Snowy Owl will hunt by both day and night, since daylight hours are so much longer above the Arctic circle during the summer months. As well as lemmings, it also eats various small mammals and birds - and will also feed on carrion.



Northern Saw-whet Owl *(above)*

Scientific name:	*Aegolius acadicus*
Length:	8 inches
Habitat:	Dense coniferous or mixed forest, wooded swamps
Identification:	Small, long-winged owl with short tail. Brown above, lightly streaked white on forehead and crown, white beneath streaked red-brown, yellow eyes, dark bill, buffy facial discs
Similar species:	Boreal Owl larger, has yellow bill, facial discs grayish with dark border

The Northern Saw-whet Owl likes dense cover and is strictly nocturnal, roosting during the day in a conifer, or in the breeding season near its nest hole. Although it may be elusive, once spotted in its daytime roost it appears very tame and approachable - it can often even be picked up and held without struggling. It does not build a nest, but takes over an old woodpecker hole or tree cavity in which it lays 4-7 white eggs. These are incubated for around 4 weeks by the female and the chicks leave about 4-5 weeks after hatching. The adult is small, with long wings, a short tail, yellow eyes and a dark bill. Its plumage is warm brown above, lightly streaked with white on the forehead and crown, and white beneath streaked with red-brown; it has buffy facial discs. In their first summer, juveniles are chocolate brown with a plain tawny belly and a white triangular patch on the forehead. The Northern Saw-whet Owl mainly eats small rodents and large beetles.

Great Gray Owl

(opposite)

Scientific name:	*Strix nebulosa*
Length:	27 inches
Habitat:	Boreal forests, wooded bogs, dense coniferous forests
Identification:	Very big, long-tailed owl with large head. Mottled gray-brown above, muted gray vertical streaking below, pale gray facial discs patterned in concentric dark gray circles, yellow eyes and bill
Similar species:	Size and coloring unmistakable

The largest owl in North America, the Great Gray Owl inhabits dense forest and wooded bogs in the north and is relatively uncommon. It is not quite as large as it may appear, since its body is surrounded by a large mass of feathers that provide insulation in the cold climate it lives in. It does not build a nest, but lays 2-5 white eggs in the nest of another bird, usually in a tall tree or on a cliff. These are incubated by the female for around 4-5 weeks, and the chicks are ready to leave the nest about 5 weeks after hatching. The adult has a large head, with big, pale gray facial discs patterned in concentric dark gray circles, yellow eyes and bill and quite a long tail. Its plumage is mottled gray-brown above, with muted gray vertical streaking below; a black chin spot and two white neck marks may be evident. Although it is mainly nocturnal, the Great Gray Owl also hunts at dawn and dusk and sometimes during the day in the far north. It feeds mainly on mice, but will also take small mammals and birds.